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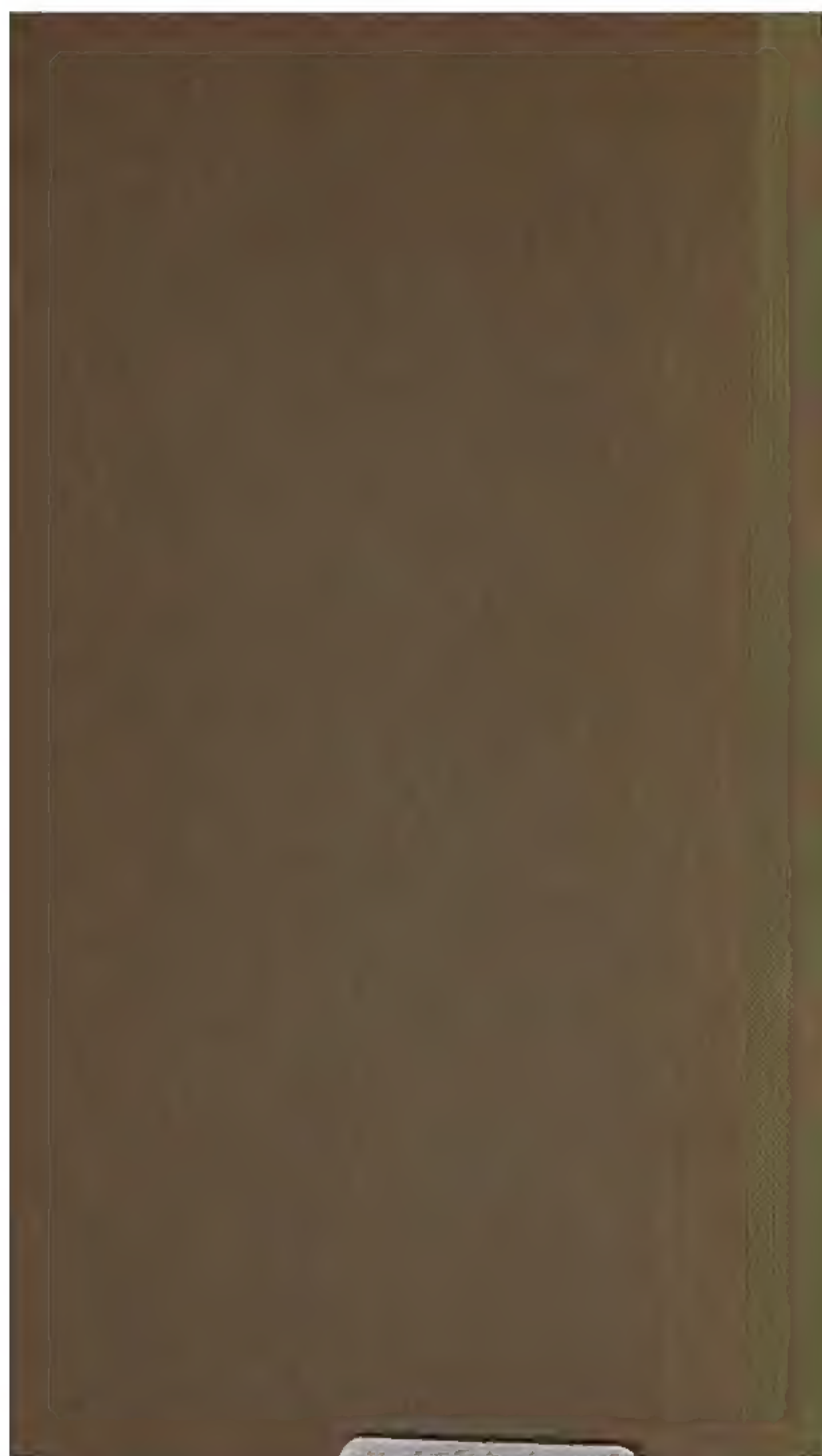


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**THE**

**DRAMATIC CENSOR.**

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John Rogers sculp.

*o'erstep not the modesty of Nature.*

Ham.

THE

# DRAMATIC CENSOR;

OR,

## CRITICAL COMPANION.

— Si quid novisti rectius istis,  
Candidus imperti : si non, his utere mecum.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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**U N K N O W N,**

**And wishing personally to remain so,**

**The D R A M A T I C C E N S O R,**

**As a mark of perfect esteem,**

**And a natural tribute to the most powerful, universal  
abilities that ever graced the English stage,**

**Thus dedicates,**

**On most disinterested principles,**

**His First Volume of Critical Observations,**

**T O**

**David Garrick, Esq;**



# ADVERTISEMENT

*AS* most writers, both for and against the stage, have either dealt out enthusiastic abuse or fulsome panegirics; the obvious utility of an impartial medium between such extremes first suggested the following work: no man, who is not either mad or silly, can be hardy enough to deny, that a well-regulated drama is worthy support in the most polished, learned or moral state; nor, on the other side, can we contend in favour of many established pieces; humour has been too often made the subtle conveyance of very licentious sentiments, and many pernicious characters are placed in too fair a point of view; to developé vice from this poetical masquerade; to strip off the serpent's shining coat, and to shew the poison which lurks within, is the DRAMATIC CENSOR's leading principle; to point out, in a plain manner, and unadorned stile, the beauties and defects of each piece; to throw out hints respecting the performance of every character worth notice; and to give a concise general idea of the plays taken into consideration, the scope of his design.

Far from glancing an eye towards infallibility of opinion, the following strictures and illustrations are submitted with all due deference to the public, as meant for useful information; how far they answer this desirable purpose, candid readers on perusal must determine.

The



## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

The DRAMATIC CENSOR will gratefully receive, and respectfully use any remarks suitable to his plan, he may be favoured with, by letter directed to the care of Mr. *Bell*, publisher of this work, near *Exeter-Exchange, Strand*.

THE

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T H E

DRAMATIC CENSOR.

RICHARD THE THIRD.

As altered from SHAKESPEARE by CIBBER.

**C**RITICISM is undoubtedly the most elaborate and ungracious of all literary compositions: passing censure must ever be painful to a liberal mind, and has no palliation, no balancing pleasure but contrasted praise; however, the general advantages arising from candid investigation, equally separated from partial indulgence or malevolent severity, deserve some degree of honest approbation, and strengthen the feelings to undertake with becoming resolution so hazardous a task.

Dramatic compositions are of a nature too nice and complicate, for all admirers of the stage to consider with that attention which is necessary to understand them properly; hence much of

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## 2 The DRAMATIC CENSOR.

the true relish and solid improvement derivable from them is lost, and often changes the theatre from what it literally may be, a profitable school of moral instruction, to the sphere of useless or prejudicial dissipation.

This consideration has given rise to the following work, in which the various opinions are diffidently submitted to, not dogmatically obtruded upon our several readers ; where we strike out new and useful lights, we doubt not being allowed some credit for them ; where we appear fallible, indulgence is hoped for ; since however we may err in the extensive scene before us, our warmest wishes are to be right.

The hallowed shrine of Shakespear every friend of intrinsic merit must approach with reverence ; yet why, amidst the meridian blaze of his brightness, should we decline discovering and pointing out those dark spots which his genius shares in common with the sun ; Implicit admiration, as well as implicit faith, argues a narrowness or sycophancy of mind, which we hope ourselves free from ; and shall as much as possible follow that excellent maxim, *to extenuate nothing, nor to set down aught in malice.*

To pursue all the nice and intricate distinctions of classical criticism, would occasion prolixity ; appeal only to the judgments of learned readers, and therefore be totally incompatible with our design ; which is merely to try each drama as

## The DRAMATIC CENSOR. 3

a picture of nature at the bar of nature ; and the manners of those nations where the scene of each is laid.

Well knowing how insipid prefatory matter generally is, thus much only is offered by way of Introduction ; and we hope the candid reader will from hence suggest whatever else may seem essential.

Of all those various subjects which have engaged the Tragic Muse, none are of equal force and dignity to historical ones ; from a multiplicity of great and interesting events, they rouse and command more passions than any other ; of this Shakespeare was a most competent judge, and happily availed himself ; I say happily, because he not only thereby gained a wide fruitful field for the exertion of his amazing talents ; but in a political sense did honour to his country, by delivering faithfully many memorable events, in a much more striking manner than any historian could possibly do ; he has also thereby indulged that commendable national vanity which makes Britons fond of seeing Britons distinguished on the theatre of life.

RICHARD THE THIRD, as acted, tho' essentially Shakespeare's, is much indebted for its variety, compactness and spirit, to the late Colley Cibber, whose thorough acquaintance with the Stage, well qualified him for regulating a plot, and arranging of scenes, which is

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indeed no more than a kind of dramatic mechanism, yet indispensibly requisite.

The laureat has been blamed for mutilating other plays of beautiful passages to enrich this ; but, tho' I admit it to be literary depradation, I must rather vindicate than censure him ; there is little, if any dishonesty in stealing jewels merely to ornament the just owner ; besides it shews what Cibber was never accused of, modesty, — by avoiding studiously the insertion of his own inadequate stuff.

This play opens with well-imagined propriety, as a plain, simple introduction is the best preparative to a succession and climax of interesting events ; expectation strained at the beginning most commonly produces a faint unaffecting catastrophe ; the previous character of Henry, and the mode of his introduction, prejudice us in his favour ; his philosophical reflections are suitable to his depressed situation, as well as his turn of mind ; and Tressel's pathetic narration not only serves to raise our tenderest concern for an unhappy king and father, but prepares us with great judgment for what we must expect to find in Gloster, which description naturally arising out of the circumstance, has far greater merit than those lugged in headlong merely for sake of explanation.

Notwithstanding some good critics have condemned soliloquies in general as unnatural ; yet

we

## The DRAMATIC CENSOR. 5

we must venture to contend for their propriety ; since nothing is commoner than for people in private life, warmly possessed of any subject, to talk as if in conversation, tho' alone : in this light, Gloster is very justly brought to view, and I doubt if by any other means so striking and copious a picture could have been given of his whole heart in a first appearance ; nor could any other character have given so happy a delineation of him as he does of himself.

The first act concludes properly with putting a period to Henry's life, which indeed could not have been preserved any longer with suitable importance ; and Richard gives an extended idea of his ambitious remorseless principles in a very characteristic soliloquy.

The short scene with which the second act begins is a just preparation for the funeral of Henry ; and those obsequies being partly shewn, keep the unfortunate monarch in our remembrance till more bustling events supersede him ; Lady Ann's introduction is affecting, but her yielding to him whose hands are still red with the blood of her husband and father ; renders her future misfortunes rather just punishment than motives for pity ; however, the scene is wrought up in a very masterly manner ; and in the performance gives scope for capital acting ; the concluding part of this act introduces the duke of Buckingham, the Queen-dowager, and acquaints us with king Edward's death ; R-  
chard

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Richard also unveils part of his design relative to prince Edward, whose approach and destination to the tower he announces.

The young King and his brother, the duke of York, make a most pleasing appearance in the first scene of the third act; that solid good sense discoverable in one, and the shrewd, pregnant simplicity of the other, are admirably struck off; after their departure for the tower, Richard's earnest disclosure of his views to Buckingham opens a wider field for expectation; and his method of securing his cousin to his interest shews Gloster an able politician, fit to avail himself of Buckingham's weak, venal disposition.

Lady Ann's treatment in the succeeding scene manifests her husband's brutality more strongly; yet, as I have already hinted, seems no more than a just consequence of that unpardonable vanity which led her into such an unnatural connection.

Buckingham's illustration of the method used by him to work on the citizens, and his treatment of them when they enter, show him versed in court chicanery; particularly throwing in a remark, 'tis hard—*The mayor should lose his title with his office.* Richard's hypocrisy is here painted in a capital manner; and is most admirably assisted by the assumed passion of his cousin on one side, with the sycophantic credulity of the citizens on the other; his reluctance and their persuasions, like well-adapted lights and shades, engage and please the attention; which



## **The DRAMATIC CENSOR. 7**

is well varied by Richard's sudden transition to a state of ambitious exultation, and from thence to a struggle with conscience, which appears to lodge a constant thorn in his breast.

In the beginning of the fourth act, our feelings are turned upon objects of real strong pity; our tears which have ceased since the first, are here called forth again judiciously in behalf of an unhappy mother and her helpless infants; the characters introduced to furnish fresh matter for concern are well brought forward, and the Queen's grief is wrought up in an affecting manner; however, I must be of opinion, that the scene is not near so interesting as it might have been made; that lady Ann and the dutchess of York are here mere non-essentials, that the children do not affect us as they ought, and that all the Queen's speeches, except the last three, are far too unimportant for her heart-rending situation.

Richard, now discovered as King, works upon Buckingham, by distant insinuation, to effect his main purpose, that of destroying the children; his cautious earnestness, and the duke's conscientious diffidence, are extremely well contrasted; the King's impatience at Buckingham's coldness, his indifference at the news brought by lord Stanley, his enquiry after, and remarks on his wife Ann, with his subsequent contemptuous treatment of his lukewarm cousin, exhibit great and masterly diversification of action.

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The scene between Tirrel, Dighton and Forest, should for two reasons have been made longer; first to have raised our pity more, even by the immediate murderers; next, to have given Richard more time for his appearance at the Tower: there are but ten lines from going to meet Tirrel in his closet, before that impious tool comes on with his followers quite prepared: had he mentioned the premium and the King's favour to lull their scruples, the business would have been conducted more consistently.

The King's soliloquy is masterly; anxious hope and guilty ambition quiver in every syllable; nor is the succeeding scene less characteristic; Catesby's entrance is well contrived, and gives a good opportunity for that fiery spirit breaking out, which so much animates the remainder of the piece; Richard's interview with the ladies, tho' not essential, in some measure deserves its place, as in it the tyrant is devoted to destruction by a mother's curse: the following part of this act is as rapid, and as well a conducted series of interesting events as ever was exhibited in any drama, and it concludes with a very bold, striking climax of passion.

The three first scenes of the fifth act are merely preparatory to what follows, and therefore judiciously short; Richmond shews himself sufficiently, and stands well contrasted to his antagonist. Richard's scene in the tent is as well imagined, to engage the feelings of spectators and to shew the power of action as possible; nor  
could

could ghosts ever be more justifiable than here ; however we must offer a doubt whether such false creations of the brain ; should ever be called to view ; since it is most certain that they play upon our passions in flat and absurd contradiction to our reason ; let this point be determined as it may, Cibber shewed just critical judgment in rejecting the second introduction of those imaginary existences ; which we find in Shakespear's Richard ; because in representation one would have flattened the other, and both must have consequently palled : after many martial excursions, in which the leading character is very happily exhibited ; the catastrophe is wrought up to a most pleasing event in his death ; a circumstance as consonant to strict poetical justice, as it is to historical truth : Richmond's conclusive scene displays a generous, patriotic disposition, and is as agreeable as the place it stands in will admit.

Having thus given a general delineation of the plot and arrangement of scenes ; it becomes necessary to enquire for the moral, without which no dramatic piece can have intrinsic worth ; in historical plays we cannot expect much social instruction, as they chiefly appeal to national transactions ; however from Richard the Third we may draw this useful conclusion, that no degree of success and grandeur ; no gratification of lawless ambition, however splendid ; can still the voice of conscience ; which though unheard by the world, speaks in thunder to the guilty wretch, who bears such a painful monitor in his bosom.

The characters of this piece are many in number, yet exhibit no great variety of contrast: after Richard, Henry, Richmond, the Queen and Children; all the rest are of a similar complexion: Richard is truly in point of figure, sentiments, language and conduct—himself alone; however historical relation admits doubts of that monarch's personal deformity, it was certainly well judged to make his external appearance, on the stage, emblematic of his mind; and for sake of singularity dressing him only in the habit of the times may be defensible; but what excuse can be made for shewing him, at his first entrance, in as elegant a dress, as when king, I am at a loss to suggest; does he not after his scene with Lady Ann, profess a design of ornamenting his person more advantageously? Macbeth when king is always distinguished by a second dress, why not Richard? a still greater breach of propriety appears in putting mourning upon none of the persons at court but the ladies and the children; though Richard pays all other external respect to the circumstance of his brother's death.

Through three acts Richard appears the close dissembling politician, and affords no great variety of action; indeed his soliloquys are so long and so frequent; that very few who attempt to represent him avoid falling into an insipid sameness.

In the fourth and fifth acts he breaks out like a flame which has been long smothered; and through the impetuosity of agitating circumstances betrays many performers into the error of out Heroding Herod.

The

The Public have set up Mr. GARRICK as a standard of perfection in this laborious, difficult part; and if we consider the essentials, his claim to such distinction will immediately appear indisputable; a very deformed person never rises above, and seldom up to the middle stature; it is generally attended with an acuteness of features and sprightliness of eyes; in these three natural points our Roscius stands unexceptionable; variations of voice, and climax of expression, in both which he stands without an equal; graceful attitudes, nervous action, with a well-regulated spirit, to animate within natural bounds every passage, even from the coldest up to the most inflamed.

Mr. GARRICK also preserves a happy medium, and dwindles neither into the buffoon or brute; one, or both of which this character is made by most other performers: 'tis true, there are many passages which have a ludicrous turn, yet we may rest assured, that he who occasions least laughter is most right; in respect of marking particular places with peculiar emphasis, some exceptions may be taken, or doubts raised against every person I have ever seen in the part; however, tracing minute lapses of this kind, which after all may be mere matter of opinion, would occasion too great a digression; I shall therefore only mention three which strike me most; the first is,—*I am myself alone*—which words I have heard expressed in a tone of confident exultation, as if he was singularly above the rest of mankind; whereas adverting to his own unhappy composition, it should be uttered with heart-felt discontent; and

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indeed the three preceding lines, which exclude him from all social intercourse, should be expressive of concern.—The second passage is, where Buckingham solicits Richard for his promise, and Richard meditates in these lines,

I do remember me, that Henry the sixth  
Did prophesy, that Richmond should be king,  
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.

'Tis odd—a king—perhaps—

The last line is often spoke without a tone of continuation to the word, *perhaps*, which is most evidently intended: the third place is in these lines,

Hence, babbling dreams, ye threaten here in vain;  
*Conscience, avaunt*—Richard's himself again.

It is usual to speak this couplet in one continued climax of passion; whereas the two words marked in Italics, should be uttered in a lower tone, expressive of mental agony—Conscience being the constant disturber of his peace, and a great bar to his resolution; the latter part of the line rises to a kind of triumphant exultation, which not only varies, but gives force to the expression.

Having placed Mr. GARRICK far before all other competitors in this character. as supporting every scene throughout the whole with very capital merit; it would be ungenerous not to acknowledge, that Mr. Mossop displays great powers, Mr. SHERIDAN much judgment, and Mr. SMITH considerable spirit; but had the first more delicacy, with less labour; the second more harmony, and less stiffness; the third more variation, with less levity, their merit would rise several degrees beyond what it is.

Henry's

Henry's character is composed of pathetic dignity; in representation it should be studiously remembered, that his griefs, tho' a distressed king and father, should not be blubbered like those of a school-boy; but should paint feelings worthy the monarch and the man—The part is admirably drawn, and highly finished, yet cannot I remember any performer doing it tolerable justice, except Mr. DIGGES; who is now, I believe, retired from the stage.

Richmond requires little more than a good figure, free deportment, with smooth, spirited expression; yet our theatres have not often filled it with ability: the late Mr. PALMER, tho' no tragedian, came nearest the idea I can form of it.

The Queen, tho' not wrought up to the pitch her circumstances seem to admit, is a character of much respect and attention; Mrs. PRITCHARD did more for it in action, than the Author in writing; it is now given to second and third rates, for what reason is hard to say, as there never was, nor perhaps ever will be, an actress of higher estimation, than the lady just named: what she did not think beneath her is certainly equal to any existing merit, and the public have an undoubted right to expect capital performance, wherever it can be introduced; nor should the ridiculous word, *consequence*, deter managers from fulfilling the point of duty.

The sentiments and versification of this tragedy are rather familiarly-nervous, than flowing and affluent; however, the language all through is uniformly characteristic, unless we object to a person  
in



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in Henry's situation stepping aside to the allusions of *frosty Caucasus* and *December snow*. Since it is trespassing upon probability and nature, to make a character deeply distressed or torn with passion vent poetical similitudes ; for which reason also we must condemn those lines, in the last speech of the fourth act, tho' the thought is really fine, that speak of the *fever-worn wretch* : they are generally omitted, but more, I believe, to relieve the actor's utterance, than from any idea of impropriety.

Upon the whole, RICHARD appears much better calculated for representation than perusal, as indeed every bustling piece must be ; however, taste and judgement will not by any means hold it light in the closet.

H A M

# H A M L E T.

Written by Mr. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

**T**HE opening of this tragedy is extremely well devised ; the time of night, the place, the characters, and what they speak, all most naturally concur to raise an awful preparatory apprehension for the appearance of that supernatural agent on whom the main action totally depends ; and indeed so artfully has Shakespeare wrought upon his great patroness, nature ; so powerfully does he engage our passions upon this occasion ; that even those who laugh at the idea of ghosts, as old womens' tales, cannot avoid lending an eye and ear of serious attention to this of Hamlet's father.

Introducing him previously to some of the inferior characters, brings him with double force upon the principal one ; and Horatio's determining to acquaint the prince with so strange and alarming a circumstance is very natural.

The singularity of Hamlet's appearance as a mourner, when all the rest of the court are in a state of festivity and congratulation, raises our idea of his filial affection and concern ; his indifferent, contemptuous replies to the King, and his catching so eagerly at the word *seems*, used by his mother, are a happy commencement of his character. Laertes's soliciting leave to travel seems merely cal-

culated to keep him out of the way, and to learn fencing against the fifth act.

The first soliloquy of Hamlet is particularly striking and essential, as it lays open in a pathetic, beautiful manner, the cause of his melancholy, and paints his mother's frailty with strong feeling, yet preserves a delicate respect.

The scene which introduces Horatio, &c. to communicate the circumstance of the preceding night succeeds naturally; and the broken mode of conversation, in lines and half-lines, is so artfully contrived, is executed in so masterly a manner, that the spectators, tho' they previously know the subject, are yet agreeably lured on to hear it related, and thoroughly sympathize in the transitions of Hamlet; whose interrogations concerning the awful ambassador of heaven are such, as give us a stronger feeling of the Ghost than even his appearance does; on the prince's determination to watch, notwithstanding his violent agitation, he might have used a phrase less censurable than the following,

I'll speak to it, tho' *hell* itself should gape,  
And bid me hold my peace.

Laertes's short advice to Ophelia is pregnant with affection and good sense; as Polonius is introduced to hasten his son on board, I could wish those excellent maxims for youth in the first scene of the second act, and which are always omitted in representation, were transposed to this place, and given personally by the father to his son: such a treasure of useful instruction should upon no account,

should be left to the stage. Polonius's observations to Ophelia are prudent and descriptive of paternal affection.

The remarks of Hamlet and his friends, when entered upon the platform, are very politically thrown by the author upon a far different subject from what has brought them there; and with the intervention of a flourish of martial music usher in the Ghost with as much or more effect, than at his first appearance.

The prince's address begins with becoming awe; yet I apprehend rises too suddenly into expressions ill applied to the venerable, well-known, beloved figure then before him; terror does indeed confound reason, but seldom gives birth to a passionate, presumptive effusion; wherefore I must be hardy enough to offer an objection against the following lines, as to their import;

Be thou a spirit of health, or *goblin damn'd*,  
Be thy intents *wicked*, or charitable.

Not can I by any means acquiesce in opinion, that a heart so fluttered and affected as Hamlet's is, could possibly dictate multiplied images; most certainly we discover much more of the poet and fancy than suitable feeling in

— tell

Why thy *bones* hearsed in canonized earth,  
Have burst their garments? Why the sepulchre  
Wherein we saw thee quietly interr'd,  
Hath op'd its ponderous and marble jaws,  
To cast thee up again?

Besides, in the strictness of observation, it is worthy notice, that Hamlet in one line calls the appearance in view, a *spirit*, and immediately materializes him, by mentioning the corporeal appurtenance of *bones*; the conclusion of this scene is admirably composed of broken sentences; terror, passion and assumed resolution.

In the succeeding scene, a narration of a very affecting nature is delivered by the Ghost, in language worthy that inimitable author, who created characters from the force of imagination, and, from the same inexhaustible source, furnished a peculiar mode of expression for each.

The Roman catholic opinion of purgatory is inculcated through the whole of this interview; and funeral rites, or preparatives thereto, particularly mentioned in this line,

Unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd.

But whether Shakespear may thence be deemed a favourer of popish principles, remains a matter of much doubt; and the determination, could we come at it, would be of no consequence to our present purpose; however, let the religious bent be what it may, we must admit the Ghost's stimulation to revenge, furnishes a very gross idea of immortality, which should be freed from the passions and remembrances of clay; nor does the palliative distinction which forbids any violence against the Queen, take off the imputation of mortal frailty, hanging about an existence merely spiritual; an abrupt departure, and those beautiful lines with which the Ghost disappears, are a very happy conclusion to the

the scene, which spun out to a greater length would have lost much of its force and beauty.

Hamlet's ensuing soliloquy is very natural, and highly expressive of the impressions left upon him; his conversation with Horatio and Marcellus is judiciously evasive: for the circumstance just learned of his father's death, does not admit in policy of communication; and if it did, a repetition would pall the audience: however, tho' this scene altogether has the merit of pleasing propriety, I can by no means, unless Hamlet *here* assumes his frenzy, commend the light expressions to his father's shade—*Truepenny—working in the cellarage—old mole—worthy pioneer*—especially as he is calling upon his friends, in a most solemn, sensible, manner, for a promise of secrecy.

Thus ends the first act; which is so full of business, and that of so important a nature, that perhaps no author but Shakespeare could have produced any thing after, relative to the same story, worthy of attention; yet what follows shews us the possibility and executive power.

Polonius commences the second act with Ophelia, who, in a very picturesque manner, makes her father and the audience acquainted with the prince's distraction; which the sly old statesman, imputing to Hamlet's passion for his daughter, determines to avail himself of with the King; as appears by his reading a letter and commenting upon it in the next scene; which, with the Queen's admitting love as a probable cause of her son's phrenzy, determines them to feel his inclination upon that point: Polo-

nus, like a busy, useful courtier, undertakes this, and encounters Hamlet, whose pretence of not knowing him, occasions much pointed satire, and several agreeable repartees; from whence, Polonius, not being able to deduce any thing useful, retires, and makes way for two other court-spies, who, under a veil of friendship, endeavour to worm out the secret; but he evades their design in a different and more masterly manner; there could not be a more pregnant, rich and philosophical dissertation upon the mode of his own mind, and the excellence of human nature, than the following elegant piece of poetical prose delivered by Hamlet.

“ I have of late, but wherefore I know not lost all  
 “ mirth; foregone all custom of exercise, and indeed  
 “ it goes so heavily with my disposition; that this  
 “ goodly frame the earth, seems to me a steril pro-  
 “ montary; this most excellent canopy the air, this  
 “ majestical roof fretted with golden fire; why it ap-  
 “ pears to me nothing but a foul and pestilential con-  
 “ gregation of vapours: What a piece of work is  
 “ man? how noble in reason! how infinite in  
 “ faculties! in form and moving how express and  
 “ admirable! in action how like an angel! in ap-  
 “ prehension how like a God! the beauty of the  
 “ world! the Paragon of animals!!”

In the foregoing passage we have as concise and beautiful a delineation of human nature as thought can conceive or words express; and the immediate transition to mention of the players, who, though seemingly intruders are material agents for the plot, is excellently contrived by the author; since Hamlet,

as we may justly suppose from his proceedings, immediately suggests that use for the Actors in their profession, which soon after he makes of them.

When Polonius enters to tell him of the comedians, the Prince again assumes his stile of equivocal repartee, and indeed is pleasingly witty with the verbose old statesman; his welcome to the Players is well adapted to the mode of behaviour he has put on; but his hint to the lady of her voice "like a piece of uncurrent gold being cracked in the ring;" is not commendably delicate: requiring a taste of their quality, and making a mistake in the first line of that passage he points out respecting Pyrrhus, are pleasing and natural circumstances, though of the minute kind.

From the imagery of those speeches which the Player repeats, it appears plainly that they, and the scene in the third act are not only intended as preparatory means to convict the King of guilt, but are also meant to realize the characters of the main action: therefore the matter, manner, and action are evidently proposed as a contrast of fiction, to what it is necessary the audience should think truth.

There is no sentiment in the whole character of Hamlet, nor indeed any other more worthy a good heart and great mind, than his reply to Polonius; who says, he "will use the Players as they deserve."  
 "Much better—use every man according to his  
 "deserts, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them  
 "after your own honour and dignity; the less they  
 "deserve, the more merit is in your bounty."

At



At the beginning of the soliloquy which concludes the second act, Hamlet gives himself additional force and reality, by alluding to the Player's fictitious feelings, compared with his own substantial cause of grief; the design of rousing conscious guilt in his uncle, by a representation similar to the murder of his Father, is politic and well introduced; for a million of instances furnish indubitable proof

That murder, tho' it have no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ.

his remarks that the spirit he has seen may be a devil, and that the devil may have power to assume a pleasing shape, favour very strongly of a weak superstitious mind; and give us no exalted idea of the prince's head, however favourably we may judge of his heart.

In the first scene of the third act, we find the King eager to get at the cause of his Nephew's supposed frenzy; the Play being mentioned, and an invitation for the court to see it, his Majesty from political reasons agrees; and Ophelia is left to try what explanation she can bring her lover to—the celebrated soliloquy—*to be, or not to be*—is here introduced, and exhibits a beautiful chain of moral reasoning; the objection thrown in against suicide,

—The dread of something after death,  
is concise, persuasive, and highly consonant with the true principles of moral philosophy; Critics have with justice pointed out the inconsistency of that parenthesis which stiles the future world

An undiscovered country, from whose bourne  
No traveller returns.

*Living*

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding the master-spring of this very play is such a traveller ; therefore a palpable, flat contradiction to the above assertion ; the author no doubt meant a corporeal traveller, but it is stretching indulgence very far to admit such a latitude of expression.

The conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia is finely imagined to puzzle the spies who watch his words and actions ; and though it exhibits madness, yet as Polonius remarks of a former scene—*there is method in it* ; Shakespeare, in all his pieces, seems to have had great regard to the capital characters both as to strength and variety ; the feigned madness in this piece tends greatly to the latter, and gives much scope, particularly in this scene, for powerful action—the King's proposition of sending the prince to England, though a strange scheme, shews the apprehension which conscious guilt fixes on his mind.

Hamlet's advice to the Players is as just and sensible a lecture upon several theatrical excellencies and errors as ever was penned ; but few who perform the part have a right to deliver it ; being in many instances guilty themselves of those very absurdities which they recommend a reformation of.

Hamlet's behaviour in the scene of the play is extremely characteristic ; his sportive replies to Ophelia, and his satirical taunts to the King, suit the state of things happily : Indeed the mock representation and every other circumstance are very well conducted towards the grand point ; and his majesty's abrupt retreat sufficiently evinces his guilt ;  
the

the ensuing conversation with Rosencrans and Guildenstern plainly shews the just opinion Hamlet entertains of court sycophants, and his playing upon Polonius is pleasant, as well as poignant.

The King's soliloquy is a most finished piece of argumentative, pathetic contrition; and furnishes a very instructive picture of a guilty mind: of Hamlet's, which immediately succeeds, we cannot speak favourably, as it greatly derogates not only from an amiable but even a common moral character.

Revenge, when most provoked, rather violates human feelings; however, as in some instances, the heart cannot decline it, and what more provoking than the death of a father? Yet life for life is the utmost that can be required; for a mortal vice or failing premeditatedly to plunge the perpetrator into a state of infinite misery, had we power, would be giving nature a diabolical bent; therefore when Hamlet resolves upon taking his Uncle in some peculiar act of sin, that his heels may kick at heaven, he certainly forms a design, and utters sentiments more suitable to an assassin of the basest kind, than a virtuous prince and a feeling man.

In that excellent scene of the closet where the Prince so beautifully and so powerfully remonstrates to his mother upon her guilty and shameful situation; there appears an incident which rather casts another shade upon our hero's character; that is the death of Polonius: It happens evidently through a mistake, supposing him the King: Yet when the  
mistake

mistake is discovered, he has not common humanity enough to regret taking the life of an innocent inoffensive old man, nay the Father of a Lady too for whom he professes a regard ; but by the following lines seems to hold the matter light :

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell,  
I took thee for thy betters, take thy fortune ;  
Thou findst to be too busy is some danger.

In the conclusive speech of the act, 'tis true he seems to feel, but we apprehend too slightly ; and making himself the vindictive minister of heaven, is arraigning providence, for influencing punishment where no guilt has appeared ; by the same mode of argument every rash, or bad man may palliate the most inordinate actions.

Indeed why Polonius should be killed, in flat contradiction to every degree of poetical justice, is rather mysterious ; if meant merely as a cause for Laertes's resentment, and Ophelia's madness, I must confess that both might have been brought about on a better principle, as I hope will appear from some general strictures on the plot.

The Ghost's, appearance gives great force to, and raises a very beautiful climax of passion in this scene ; and it is impossible to form an idea of any thing better calculated for actors to strike, or an audience to feel in ; the circumstances and expression are so highly deserving of each other ; that the performance must be languid indeed, and feelings totally benumbed, if both eyes and hearts are not much interested.

The King's resolution of sending Hamlet to England seems justly precipitated by the unjustifiable event of Polonius's death; the scene in which the King enquires for the body contains some pointed expressions, and the Prince's departure is of that unaffecting nature, that I doubt whether one spectator out of a thousand ever said I hope he will come again, though from such a voyage so late in the piece it seems very doubtful.

Ophelia's distraction is an extreme pretty variation of action; and is described with a forceable delicacy, worthy of Shakespeare's pen; Laertes is ushered in with a strange insinuation importing no less than a proposition to chuse him King; how this became necessary, or is reconcileable I cannot see as in a preceding scene the King says, that he cannot enforce any law against Hamlet on account of the murder committed, because.

He's loved of the distracted multitude,  
Who like not in their judgement, but their eyes;  
And where tis so, th' offenders scourge is weigh'd,  
But never the offence.

Nay speaking of the matter afterwards to Laertes, the king delivers himself thus

Why to a public court I might not go,  
Is the great love the people bear him;  
Who dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
Convert his gyves to graces.

Now if Hamlet was so extremely popular, how is it possible to suppose that Laertes by complaining of a private injury, should supersede him in the people's favours, and gain their voices to the prejudice  
I of

of his birth right ; besides Laertes's attack upon, and language, to a monarch, without knowing a syllable of the matter he contends about, makes him an absolute drawcanfir equally the foe of justice, reason, and decorum ; indeed the author seems to have been sensible of this, making the king say

Will you, in revenge of your dear father's death  
Destroy both friends and foes ?

Ophelia's second introduction relieves and gives some sparks of life to a conversation full of false fire and impotence ; wherein one party appears a blustering fool, and the other a dastard villain : as to the conspiracy against Hamlet's life, it seems the *ne plus ultra* of a forced catastrophe ; a plan, which by approving it, shews Laertes to be as much an intentional murderer as the King.

There is a degree of detestation mingled with contempt, and that disagreeable feeling both these characters raise ; the Queen's account of Ophelia's mournful end is justly admired ; and tho' the lady while in her senses, said very little to affect us, yet here the poet teaches us to feel for the event which has deprived her of life.

Notwithstanding Mr. Voltaire's objections to the first scene of the fifth act, as being inconsistent with the dignity and decorum of tragedy, are in a great measure true ; yet the characters are so finely drawn ; such pointed satire and such instructive moral sentiments arise, as give it great estimation and raise it far above insipid propriety ; some expressions of the grave digger in answer to Hamlet's question

question, how long a corse will be in the ground before it rots; however true, are offensively indelicate.

The funeral of Ophelia is indeed a maimed and to me, an irreconcilable piece of work.—She is we find allowed Christian burial, is attended by the king queen and whole court yet the clergyman refuses funeral service; supposing her death doubtful, tho' the queen in the foregoing act imputes it without reservation to an accident; and I venture to presume there is no medium between admission to consecrated ground with all usual ceremonies; and a total exclusion from the whole; but the author seems to have been in a state of difficulty; he would have a grave, and made the best apology for it he could.

The encounter of Hamlet and Laertes is supported with an excess of spirit on both sides and, if we consider the real state of things, rather blameably on the part of the former; he has killed the father and in consequence deprived the sister of her senses; yet when a grieving, injured brother and son vents an explanation, very excusable in his situation; the prince, even at the interment of a Woman he pretends love for; indulges a most outrageous degree of passion; interrupts a sacred ceremony and offers his lesson in stile of a challenge to Laertes; nay after most insulting behaviour, when separated—he retorts accusation upon the challenged person in the following irritative taunt,

Hear you Sir,

What is the reason you abuse me thus?

I lov'd you ever—but tis no matter,

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew, the dog will have his day.

There

There is indeed a palliative excuse made by Hamlet to Laertes for this inconsistent behaviour at the beginning of the last scene—where he says ;

———This presence knows,  
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd  
With a sore *distraction* ; what I have done,  
That might your nature, honour and exception  
Roughly awake ; I here proclaim was *madness*.

Now if it be considered, that his madness has been but *assumed*, this appears a mean prevarication, to a man whom he has most deeply injured, and who, to his knowledge, never meant him wrong ; to say that this passion was put on to deceive the court, weighs but little, as we find in the action, dishevelled hair, ungartered Stockings, &c. are laid aside for a composed appearance ; and immediately after the bluster we find him not only regular in conversation with a coxcomb messenger of the King's, but punctual in the terms of the challenge ; and coolly sensible in fulfilling it *before the court*, without any design, more than the credit of victory in view.

Another faint apology is made in a scene with Horatio, where the prince seems to be sorry that the *bravery* of Laertes's grief should so far provoke him ; but all this scene, except a very few lines, is left out in the representation ; and indeed, tho' meant to account for Hamlet's coming back, it draws such a strange picture of his getting at the King's dispatches, and forging others, to turn the design of his death upon Rosencraus and Guildenstern,



denstern, that we lament such low chicanery in a character of dignity ; one who had no occasion, but much to the contrary, to appear a volunteer in his uncle's proposition of sending him to England ; however, as the transaction of his speedy return should be accounted for, I wish somewhat more like a narrative was preserved in action.

Ostrick is a whimsical mushroom of fancy, and tho' Shakespeare presents his audience with a Danish beau, he took the constituent parts from English court-butterflies of his days, and even furnishes him with the equivocal punning stile, which took its rise and fashion from that second Solomon, James the first, whose pedantry and hatred of witches were equally conspicuous.

The last scene, if there are two good fencers, (which by the bye seldom happens) must please the eye considerably ; yet such a slaughter of characters must cloy the most sanguine critic that ever thirsted for theatrical blood-shed, and pity must extend very far indeed, to attend even the expiring hero of this piece with any degree of patience.

Having thus progressively delineated the plan, it becomes necessary to make some general strictures upon the whole, to justify those occasional remarks which have been made.

At the opening of the play, we find that a very remarkable apparition has been seen by the palace-guard two nights together ; yet so resolute and secret have these soldiers been, that no mention is made of it, except to Horatio, who disbelieves the story ; but on his watch the third night, is con-  
vinced

vinced by ocular demonstration ; upon which, he very naturally determines to mention it to Hamlet in particular, as seemingly most interested in the appearance ; this, in conjunction with Bernardo and Marcellus, he does the next morning ; here it seems a little irreconcilable, that Horatio, the particular and intimate friend of the prince, should be in Elsinoor two days, or more, as we must suppose from circumstances, before he paid respects to his royal patron ; these, I confess, are minutiae, yet claim notice in the strictness of criticism.

Hamlet's assumed madness might undoubtedly have been made the instrument of some important secret purpose relative to his father's murder, and his own just resentment ; yet, as it now appears, answers no other end, than merely cajoling the the King, distressing the Queen and Ophelia, bamming Polonius and the courtiers, and giving great scope for capital acting ; which last article seems much more the author's intention through this piece than decorum and consistence.

The King not being able, either by his spies, or even condescending to be a listener himself, to find out the bottom of this frenzy, which, through conscious guilt to him looks terrible, forms a resolution of sending him to England, under pretence of receiving tribute ; but, as appears afterwards, that the complaisant English monarch should put to death the heir of the Danish crown upon mere request.

Strange ! that he who found means to destroy his his own brother, in the plenitude of power and popular,

pular esteem, should take such a round-about method to dispose of a nephew he seems to fear ; and full as strange is it, that Hamlet, who has so much cause to suspect his uncle's intention, and who has such powerful motives for staying at home, should tamely, without objection, go upon the voyage.

On returning, we do not find him taking any step towards punishing the murderer ; nay, most politely undertakes to win a wager for him ; how unworthy for him then does the catastrophe come about ! when wounded with a poisoned weapon himself, when he hears of his mother's being poisoned, then and not before, urged by desperation, not just revenge, he demolishes the king of shreds and patches, as he properly stiles his uncle in the third act.

From this view, it is, with all deference, apprehended, that, after his detection at the play, if his majesty, upon the principle of self-defence, had formed a design of taking the prince off by instruments at home ; if that design had been made known to the Queen ; had she, through maternal affection, put Hamlet on his guard ; and had that prince taken measures worthy the motives of stimulation, a tyrant of some consequence and uniformity would have been shewn in Claudius ; a tender mother in the Queen, and a hero in Hamlet ; the innocent characters, Polonius and Ophelia, might have been saved ; and death prevented from stalking without limitation at the catastrophe : as it stands, no less than eight of the characters are disposed

posed of that way, four in view at one time upon the stage.

In respect of characters, we are to lament that the hero, who is intended as amiable, should be such an apparent heap of inconsistency ; impetuous, tho' philosophical ; sensible of injury, yet timid of resentment ; shrewd, yet void of policy ; full of filial piety, yet tame under oppression ; boastful in expression, undetermined in action : and yet from being pregnant with great variety, from affording many opportunities to exert sound judgment and extensive powers, he is as agreeable and striking an object as any in the English drama.

In the performance of this character, we must, as in RICHARD, place Mr. GARRICK far before any other competitor ; his reception of, and address to the Ghost ; his natural, picturesque attitude, terror-struck features, low, tremulous expression, rising in harmonious gradation, with the climax of his speech and feelings, all give us the most pleasing, I had almost said, astonishing sensibility ; in all the pointed parts of the dialogue his matchless eyes, anticipate his tongue, and impress the meaning upon us with double force ; no man ever did, nor possibly, ever will, speak hemistichs, broken sentences, and make transitions with such penetrating effect ; in this lies the indisputable superiority of our modern Roscius ; that, where other performers, and good ones too, pass unnoticed, he is frequently great ; where an author is languid, he gives him spirit ; where powerful, due support ; out of many instances, I shall select only two. First, where

Hamlet says to his interposing friends—*I say, away*—then turning to the Ghost—*Go on—I'll follow*.—His variation from extreme passion to reverential awe, is so forceably expressed in eyes, features, attitude and voice, that every heart must feel ; the second is in the third act, where the Queen says, the Ghost is but *the coinage of his brain* ; his turning short from looking after the apparition with wildness of terror, and viewing his mother with pathetic concern is most happily executed.

Mr. BARRY gave considerable pleasure in Hamlet, which was, however, chiefly derived from a fine figure and musical voice ; but declamation and originality were wanting.

Mr. SHERIDAN, under the disadvantage of a moderate person, and still more moderate voice, by the effects of sound judgment, undoubtedly stands second ; in the lighter scenes, he wants, 'tis true, ease and levity ; but in the soliloquies, and the third act closet scene, he is, or has been, truly excellent.

Mr. Ross has the ease of a gentleman and dignity of a prince ; but wants weight for the declamation ; poignancy of expression for the spirited parts, and variation of countenance for the vehement passions ; however, he might justly gain more critical applause, if he would forget the audience ; glow with his character, and be more assiduous in the support of every scene, not drop some, as if unworthy his notice.

The whole part of the King, except his soliloquy, is truly wretched for an actor : and, to say

truth, I never saw one who did not make a very insipid figure in it, the late Mr. SPARKS excepted; he was great in the forementioned soliloquy, respectable in every passage of the least regard, and so peculiarly happy in falling, when stabbed, from the throne, that we may truly say, a good end apologized for a very bad character.

Polonius is drawn with some tint of the whimsical, yet I cannot suppose him meant for that laughing-stock, that buffoon of Tragedy, he is generally represented; wherefore I must be bold to assert, that Mr. MACKLIN, who, while his capabilities lasted, should never have been separated from the stage, was far the best of many I have seen; he shewed oddity, grafted upon the man of sense, and, as I remember, retained most of that scene at the beginning of the second act, which good sense and Shakespeare's friends must lament the general omission of. — Mr. SHUTER, whom nature conceived and brought forth in a fit of laughter, may mean extremely well, but, in this character, his literally happy countenance plays rather against him. Mr. TASWELL and Mr. ARTHUR steered a medium course, which, if it did not reach capital propriety, yet deserved considerable praise.

Laertes is a character no way remarkable, unless as contributing to the catastrophe; unless by joining in, and executing a villainous device for the destruction of Hamlet; Mr. LEE, whose abilities strengthened many second and third parts, while they marred principals, made more of Laertes considerably than any other performer has done for several years.

The Ghost is most admirably written; and according to the idea I form of supernatural utterance, adapted to supernatural appearance. Mr. QUIN has never been excelled, nor by many degrees equalled; solemnity of expression was his excellence in tragedy, and, if I may be allowed the remark, his fault. Tho' not directly to my purpose at present, I cannot help observing that Shakespeare's fame as an actor, was disputed only because he wrote, as plainly appears, for the mode of speaking, Mr. GARRICK, by most excellent example, has established; he certainly, as a judge and lover of nature, despised the titum-ti, monotonous sing-song then fashionable, and indeed equally admired, till within less than these last thirty years; for this reason, he was judged to be but a middling performer, except in the Ghost; and there, with propriety, no doubt, he assumed pomposity, which, on other occasions, less commendable, would have rendered him a very popular actor.—Want of action in the Ghost throws a damp on the narration; if a spirit can assume corporeal appearance, there can be no reason to suppose imaginary arms motionless, no more than imaginary legs; however, some peculiarity in this point, as well as the tones of expression, should be observed.

Horatio is the only amiable man in the piece, yet except his first scene, is very inconsiderable: what could be made of such a character, Mr. HAVARD shewed in full; and it would be wronging Mr. HULL's sensibility, for such feelings as actuate Ham-

Hamlet's friend, not to acknowledge he does him great justice.

The Grave-digger was never in better preservation than with Mr. YATES.—The Queen should be an object of detestation or pity, yet is neither, but an odd compound of both.—Mrs. PRITCHARD here, as in many others much more interesting—when shall we *see her like again*.—Ophelia found a great friend in Mrs. CIBBER, and has no reason to complain of her intimacy with Miss MACKLIN.

As to the versification and dialogue of this piece, they are flowing without monotony, poetical without bombast, easy without flatness, and always speak to the heart, where there is opportunity or occasion. To transcribe all the beautiful passages would seem a design to fill up; and to produce only few, where there is abundance, must be deemed partiality; wherefore I refer to the reader's taste and the piece itself; presuming to conclude my remarks on it with one general observation, which is, that no play can afford more entertainment on the stage, or improvement in the closet, tho' abounding with superfluities and inconsistencies; several of the former are omitted in performance, most of the latter must remain; all the moral we can deduce is, that murder cannot lie hid, and that conscience ever makes a coward of guilt.

The S T R A-



## THE STRATAGEM.

A COMEDY. By FARQUHAR.

**A**S Mr. Pope declared an honest man the noblest work of God, so Mr. Addison pronounced a good tragedy to be the noblest work of man; whether he advanced this opinion from intending to raise such a masterly and permanent monument to his own reputation upon the story of Cato; or if he did, how much he failed in the great attempt, we shall not at present pretend to determine; but rather yield to Dryden's assertion, that an epic poem is undoubtedly the most arduous and comprehensive effort of human genius.

The tragic muse confessedly claims great pre-eminence over her sister the comic; yet if we consider, that a knowledge of ourselves and the world are the best possessions of our minds, the laughing lady, tho' she must yield precedence to dignity, may certainly, upon just principles, boast a greater share of utility; the elevated passions and incidents with which we are treated by the former may warm, melt, and astonish our feelings; while the latter, playing with fancy in its natural, or some other familiar sphere, exhilarates our spirits, puts judgment in good humour, and pleasantly prepares us to receive some occasional necessary lashes of correction, applied to our vices or follies.

There

There is one remark relative to the dramatic sisters well worth notice ; that, as the elder is less general, so she is more lasting ; her characters and passions are the same through ages ; while the younger is forced to draw existing peculiarities ; which, when their parent, fashion vanishes, disappear with her, and become obsolete ; thus the comedies of Shakespeare and Ben Johnson exhibit masterly genius, yet as the originals they took their pictures from are unknown, their force and beauty are in a great measure lost. When Mr. Garrick's Fribble was first played, a small hat helped considerably to mark the petiteness and insignificance of his figure ; what sort of a hat must he wear now to distinguish him from the present Lilliputian head-covers.

We are told, that Wilkes played all his fine gentlemen in full-bottomed wigs, as Cibber did the fops also ; how strange would any thing of that kind appear at present, when even bishops wear crop-eared bobs ; the coxcomb and fine lady of every seven years vary considerably in almost every point of conversation and deportment, as they do every single year in regard of dress ; wherefore the writer of the present day, if he has genius suitable, must have great advantage of his predecessors, prevailing manners and originals being on his side.

There have been instances of men very little conversant in life writing tolerable tragedies ; but I don't remember one, nor do I believe an instance can be given, of any person writing a comedy of merit,

merit, whose intercourse with, and knowledge of society has not been pretty extensive.

Unities of time and place and place are, strictly applied, critical trammels, serving no purpose but to check the noble flights of genius; the same latitude of imagination, which can move us from a chamber to a street, and thence to a grove, may undoubtedly reconcile much greater transitions; avoiding this very allowable liberty has made most of our modern tragedies so barren of incident, that they are heavy and palling to a degree; but tho' moderate freedom is contended for, poetical licentiousness should be avoided; a child to be born in the first act, and appear sixteen or seventeen years old in the fifth, as we find in the *Winter's Tale*, throws contempt upon probability, and overstrains the utmost stretch of credibility; such a lapse of time is totally unwarrantable; indeed as comedy is a delineator of familiar life, the unities should be much more punctually observed in her compositions than those of tragedy.

Thus much premised, let us proceed to the investigation of Mr. Farquhar's last production; an odd, yet it is hoped, not very blameable composition for a dying author; whose genius, like an expiring taper, has here thrown out several stronger flashes of light, than when in a perfect state of existence.

The *STRATAGEM*, more properly so called than *Beaux Stratagem*, takes its name and birth from the declining circumstances of two genteel spirited young fellows, who, from their own account,

count, have spent their fortunes, and rather chose to retire from the circle of gay life, before necessity subjected them to contempt; having seen many examples of worthy, sensible men, who, wanting full pockets, were not only shunned, but publicly ridiculed by coxcombs of their former acquaintance, whose finances remained still unimpaired.

The design of our adventurers, travelling to pick up a fortune in a matrimonial way, tho' not strictly honourable, is no way chimerical or improbable; and laying the first scene in a public-house, gives an opportunity of opening the play, and its general design, with humour as well as propriety.

The bustle of Boniface and the pertness of Cherry are extremely characteristic, nor can any thing be better supported than the forward, self-sufficient, talkative landlord is with his guests in the first scene; the praise of his beer, his punctuality respecting its age, its killing his wife, with the help of usquebaugh, his resignation upon that circumstance, his transition to the characters of lady Bountiful, the other ladies, and Mrs. Sullen, is a well-expressed chain of connected, humorous nothingness, which is not a little enlivened by making every person old Bonny mentions, a subject of appeal to the tankard; his curiosity in founding Archer about his master, and Archer's whimsical reserve work a comic effect.

The scene of explanation between Aimwell and Archer seems rather essentially the effect of their situation and scheme than merely a designed information to the audience; and Boniface comes in

happily to prevent its being tedious ; the conversation concerning supper is well wrought up, and Archer's objections to pig and onions judiciously thrown in, whether we consider them as involuntary ones, forgetting his assumed station, or as design of giving Aimwell a better opportunity of shewing himself the master,

Boniface's comments and conjectures upon the money which Aimwell commits to his care, are such as might be expected from such a person, who appears, under cover of specious, open bluntness, to be a rogue himself, and an encourager of other rogues—Cherry's dislike of his principles recommends her—but when she recals the words, *my father !* and says—" I deny it—my mother was a  
 " good free-hearted, generous woman ; and I can't  
 " tell how far her good-nature might have tended for  
 " the good of her family,"—she trespasses too much upon the bounds of delicacy.

Archer's ensuing dialogue with her is spirited, pleasing and natural ; females of an inn are deemed lawful game both for genteel and servile travellers ; what he says to her is common-place flattery, therefore well-adapted to a gallant footman ; her replies are the right strain of bar-maid smartness and wit ; her catching at a slip of expression when he says—  
 " There's a swarm of Cupids, my little Venus,  
 " which has done the business much better,"—that being rather above the rest of his stile—is well thrown in, and his confusion upon the unexpected questions respecting his name, parish, &c. not only gives Cherry a plausible reason for viewing him as

sublimous character, but also affords him a very good opportunity of exhibiting equivocal looks and expression: the short, subsequent repartees are extremely pleasant; their concluding with a second kiss, and Boniface's calling Cherry, give a timely termination to the first act.

At the beginning of the second act, Mrs. Sullen, a married, and Dorinda, a single lady, are introduced; by their conversation, we find, that the former has been bred up in, and is fond of town-life; that the latter has passed her time in, and is reconciled to rural retirement, or at most a country town.

Mrs. Sullen, after rallying country pleasures, and giving no very favourable idea of her lord and master, in a description as inconsistent with decency, as his behaviour is with good-nature and good sense, approaches the squire, on his entrance, with becoming affability, to which he makes very brutal returns; indeed Sullen appears to have no manner of business here but to draw his own picture when sober, as he does afterwards when drunk; on ordering Scrub to get ready for shaving his head, the lady throws out a most shameful hint concerning his temples; which, to make it more gross, is in representation twice repeated, this gives Scrub, who catches her meaning, an opportunity of raising a gallery-laugh, by the mean, pitiful, pantomimical action of representing his master's horns with two fingers; this piece of behaviour shews the lady to be void of sense as well as modesty; a servant, and such a servant as Scrub especially, is a

strange confidante for such an explanation. I heartily wish the stage ladies would omit the passage, and go directly to “Inveterate stupidity ! Did you ever know,” &c.

The remainder of this scene has spirit, yet offers out a very faint exculpation for Mrs. Sullen’s mode of thinking and speaking ; except in that line where she says to Dorinda ; “ if I go a step beyond the bounds of honour, leave me ; the mention of going to church immediately after such a conversation, is I believe not at all unnatural in a fine lady.

The short ensuing scene is of very little consequence except containing some very just and keen remarks upon the impression that Aimwell’s, external appearance is likely to make ; the satire tho’ only pointed at a country congregation might be as justly applied to many thousands in this metropolis who are equally devoted to outside show, and unmeaning curiosity.

Gibbet’s account of his plunder is pleasant and satirical ; Boniface’s mention of his two guests natural, and their joint endeavours to sound Archer, with his evasive answers are truly comic ; the introduction of Cherry, with her childish repetition of love’s catechism, preserves a flow of spirits—I could wish the question where love goes out had been omitted ; the discovery of Archer not being a footman is well thrown in and the girl’s proposition of marriage tho something forward, by no means unnatural, how she stands possessed of two thousand pounds immediately at her own disposal admits some doubt ; Archer’s hesitation falls well in ; chery’s taking it

as a confirmation of his superior rank justifies her discernment; and the friendly hint concerning her father shows her heart in a very favourable light.

Archer's soliloquy is very pertinent, pleasant and lively; but somewhat ungenerous; where speaking of one who has offered so substantial a proof of confidence and regard; he says—"if the wench would promise to die when the money were spent—E gad one would marry her." this may be gallant, but is mean and mercenary also; notwithstanding rhimes or tags as they are called, appear peculiarly absurd in comedy; I am willing to forgive the four following for that good sense they exhibit, and that certain truth they so agreeably convey in verse almost as easy and natural as prose.

For whatsoe'er the Sages charge on pride,  
The angels fall, and twenty faults beside;  
On earth I'm sure, 'mongst us of mortal calling,  
Pride saves man oft, and woman too from falling.

The ladies again present themselves and inform us that the single one has received one of love's instantaneous lightening-winged darts from Aimwell's eyes while at church; Mrs. Sullen's raillery in this scene is extremely suitable both to character and occasion.

There is great judgement in reserving one character or more to the third, nay even the fourth act; this reinforcement Farquhar has most happily availed himself of in the parts of Scrub and Foigard; the former of whom is most certainly a child of whim, yet so near nature and so fraught with laughter that he must please; the latter is as much within



the rules of critical propriety as possible, and an object of real entertainment.

Scrub's packet of news concerning the strange gentleman cannot be unfolded properly without having a powerfull effect ; the conjectures he relates, and his own, of Aimwell's being a Jesuit, because his footman talks french, must dilate even the rigid muscles of stoicism.

Love, like necessity, being a parent of invention ; we must admit the young lady's sending Scrub to cultivate an intimacy with Aimwell's footman as a natural piece of policy ; servants being in general a communicative index to the fortune, family, connections and qualities of their masters and mistresses ; which Archer in his conversation with Scrub seems well acquainted with, and profits by ; as we shall find upon coming to that scene.

Aimwell and Archer support different feelings in their succeeding scene becomingly ; the former speaks of his mistress with all the rapture of real passion ; the latter dwells upon their original view her fortune ; yet steps somewhat aside and with much pleasantry mentions his own adventure with Cherry ; his burlesque heroics

The nymph who with her twice ten hundred pounds  
With brazen engine hot, and coif clear starch'd  
Can fire a guest, in warming of the bed

Are not only a just reproof to Aimwell's romantic allusions ; but also laughable satire upon those poetical writers, who appropriate high flown strained images

images and pompous versification to the most trifling circumstances.

Boniface's disposition of introducing his guests to each other, is truly that of a country land lord and his attempt to find out Aimwell; when he replies to his invitation of Gibbet—"who shall I tell him sir would is very consistent with impertinent curiosity and low cunning.

Gibbet's rusty appearance and ænigmatical mode of conversation are certainly well adapted to his character; Aimwell's questions are suitable and hint a just suspicion of the pretended captain; Boniface's preparative for Foigard's appearance in a blundering affectation of knowing men and languages is very laughable; and the Priest's joining company enriches the short scene he is concerned in very considerably.

Archer and Scrub are now exhibited in a diverting state of familiarity; the droll simplicity of the latter is a well drawn contrast to the polite shrewdness of the former; who artfully feels the simpleton's pulse and under friendship's assumed veil, winds into the subject he has in view; this whimsical *tete a tete* never fails, even with indifferent performance, setting the risible faculties at work; Scrub's terrible secret of being in love with Gipsy is a most forceable stroke of low humour; and the chain of explanation which arises from it concerning the French count, the Priest and Mrs. Sullen is extremely natural; opening part of the plot seemingly without any design of the author; the transition to Scrub's various employments very properly puts a  
stop

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stop to the conversation and the ladies appear in very fit season.

Mrs. Sullen's throwing down her fan by way of lure to a footman, though a smart agreeable fellow, shews her in the light of a giddy headed coquette, or something worse ; it would have been an allowable method of beginning conversation with a gentleman, but to a servant in livery violates decorum ; besides it does not answer the intention, for Scrub is forced to act as master of the ceremonies at last.

Archer in his conversation with the ladies, uses judiciously that strained stile of expression which we may suppose a coxcomby valet would be fond of ; and lady Howd'ye's message is as poignant a piece of satire upon the unconnected jargon, and unintelligible lumber of words a fashionable footman's scull is loaded with, as ever was penned—his reply to Mrs. Sullen's surprize at his not being better provided for, came from the author's heart, though now commonly omitted—" I was offered a lieutenant's commission—but that's not provision for a gentleman."—This seems a contempt thrown on subaltern gentlemen—but FARQUHAR felt the forceable truth having been in that station himself ; if it was too little forty years ago, what is it now when every article of life is advanced above a third ? and yet military pay remains unaugmented, though judges and several officers of state, who had salaries large enough before, have been considerably increased.—Reader excuse this short digression, strong feelings for a very respectable and serviceable set of gentlemen have forced it from me.

Dorinda's

Dorinda's information that Archer probably is a companion of my lord's in disguise, rather palliates her sister's favourable disposition towards him ; but Mrs. Sullen true to the unblushing principles of a vicious heart, throws off all reserve in these words, —“ I chose the count to serve me in a design upon  
“ my husband ; but I should like this fellow better  
“ in a design upon myself ;” —after such an explicit declaration, who can say that this lady deserved a better husband than Sullen ? —neglect on one side ; long acquaintance, frequent interviews, and very engaging qualifications, might warp even virtue at an unguarded season ; but at first sight, and such inferior rank, 'tis literally too gross.

Sullen's behaviour is such as we may expect from him ; after his exit, a design is mentioned, which as the play is performed, cannot possibly be discovered ; for it never comes to action nor explanation ; the author is not to blame, for by means of the Frenchman, Mrs. Sullen means to awaken her husband's jealousy ; but that character being totally omitted, that matter remains in the dark, unless something can be picked up from what Foigard says afterwards—but how a spectator is to know that for the project here hinted at I cannot tell.

Lady Bountifull's character is amiable, and Aimwell's feigned sickness well contrived to gain admission to his mistress ; the bustle occasioned by his mistake is well conducted, but there is a line frequently introduced to create laughter in the upper regions, which occasions me to wish Shakespeare's

excellent rule was more enforced by managers, and better observed by performers—"let your clowns speak no more than is set down"—or if this is too strait a limitation for the ministers of Momus—I would at least have them consult decency in their own additional wit, nor sacrifice decency for a little smuggled applause.—I have heard what follows frequently spoke,—“you shall taste my water, ’tis a cordial I can assure you and of my own making;” which Scrub facetiously enforces, by saying, “do taste it sir, for my lady makes very good water;” another stroke of Mrs. Sullen, for which we must criminate the Author, is very offensive; when Archer says, “I find myself very ill at this minute;” she replies (aside indeed) with this emphatic observation—“I fancy friend I could find a way to cure you.”

Aimwell’s introducing his footman to the ladies, is what I believe no peer or commoner ever did in similar circumstances; notwithstanding the apology of his understanding pictures.

Foigard’s conversation with Gipsy, entirely appertains to the under plot of introducing the Count into Mrs. Sullen’s closet; the priest is herein well characterized, too many I fear of that fraternity having made a very bad use of their influence over Families.

The picture scene between Mrs. Sullen and Archer, if we can reconcile the lady’s amorous condescension, contains many pleasing allusions and delicate compliments; particularly comparing the duke of Marlborough then in the zenith of glory to Alexan-

der ; the hint of his own disguise thrown out in Jupiter's approach to Leda, and asking the lady if she did not serve the painter who presumed to draw her breasts, as Jupiter did Salmoneus for imitating his thunder ; are well imagined, though in a romantic strain ; what follows respecting the bed-chamber, is as extraordinary a coup-de-main of gallantry as can be met with ; considering the circumstances of such different rank, so slight an acquaintance, time of the day, and company at hand ; if the attack be truly British, as Archer insinuates, then are Briton's Lions in love.—Scrub's entrance is critical and lucky ; his confused manner of telling the priest's plot, humorous and natural.

The comparative view of compliments from their lovers, for Mrs. Sullen honestly owns Archer such, between her and Dorinda is very spirited ; but both the ladies rather call a blush upon the cheek of modesty, when one says—" you can't think of the  
" man, without the bedfellow I find." To which the knowing young lady replies—" I don't find  
" any thing unnatural in that thought ; while the  
" mind is conversant with flesh and blood, it must  
" conform to the humours of its company ?" Another passage not very defensible, is—" mine spoke  
" the softest moving things—mine had his moving  
" things too ?"—This reply is generally delivered with such an illustrative emphasis, that there needs no ghost to tell what the character, or at least the actress means ; I wish this arch mode of expression, as it is called, was reformed all together ; and it

soon would be, if public resentment, instead of applause attended it.

In the latter part of this scene the author labours, and with some effect, to make Mrs. Sullen apologize for herself; when she speaks of her own heart, and the violence done her feelings by a brutish insensible husband; some rays of partiality will break in upon us for her unhappy situation; yet her relapse in these lines banish them all—"to confess  
 " the truth, I do love that fellow—and if I met him  
 " dress'd as he should be—and I undress'd as I should  
 " be—look ye sister, I have no supernatural gifts—  
 " I can't swear I could resist the temptation—  
 " though I can safely promise to avoid it; and  
 " that's as much as the best of us can do;"—a very pretty compliment truly—not resist temptation, then where is virtue?—Avoiding what may endanger it, is most certainly prudent, but resisting solicitation, and curbing our own passions prove integrity—the chastity of a Nun locked up within grates and walls is no merit; but if the same person amidst the gay world guides her steps in the right path, this is positive virtue, which I believe a great majority of the fair sex are capable of, and rises far above that degree of mere negative virtue, which Mrs. Sullen palms upon her sex, having no other principle herself.

Archer who seems to have no real honesty from the beginning, confirms it by his remark upon Aimwell's saying, when he speaks of Dorinda, "'tis  
 " a pity to deceive her, nay if you stick to those  
 principles

“ principles, stop where you are ;” Foigard’s prevarication and Archer’s detection are whimsically droll—the priest’s catch at Tipperary, and saying he went to school at Kilkenny, is as natural and pleasant a blunder as I have met with.

The short scene between Boniface and the robbers is only introduced to let the audience know the design on Mr. Sullen’s house.

A new character, Sir Charles Freeman, without whom the catastrophe could not have been brought about, makes his appearance at the beginning of the fifth act, and not only from the landlord, but from the squire’s personal appearance and conversation, gains a confirmation of the disposition of his hopeful brother-in-law.

The scene between Archer and Mrs. Sullen is supported with great warmth and vivacity ; the eclairsissement is wrought up to a strong pitch of passion, and becomes very critical, when Scrub’s fright, in a very convenient and laughable manner, interrupts it ; but Archer’s remark upon his disappointment, is gross to the last degree, and should never be spoke—“ the very timorous stag will kill in rutting time.” Scrub’s mistaking him for one of the thieves is a natural effect of fear, and varies the dialogue pleasingly.—The seizing of the robbers and the disposal of them fall well in ; Gibbet’s remark that he must save some part of his money to bring him off at the sessions, is a keen just stroke of satire against that vile perversion of justice which for bribes protects rogues who can pay well.



Archer's availing himself of a slight wound to draw lady Bountiful and Mrs. Sullen aside, that Aimwell may address Dorinda to more effect, gives the plot a probable progress; Dorinda's generous objection to a hasty marriage, and its delicate effect upon her lover are very agreeable incidents, not a little heightened by Foigard's dissatisfaction at being so often called to no purpose.—Archer's reproach to Aimwell shews him in a very unfavourable light—The unexpected intelligence brought by Sir Charles Freeman of Aimwell's succeeding to his brother's title and estate opens our views to a favourable conclusion, which till this remains judiciously doubtful; Archer's confusion upon hearing of Sir Charles's arrival shows commendable and natural spirit; Dorinda's next change is very well imagined, and the reason she assigns for it shows refined generosity, which is, that as Aimwell had candidly acquainted her with his poverty, she thinks it her duty to let him know his good fortune before their marriage.

Archer's immediate demand of half the lady's fortune is mean and unmannerly; and Aimwell's replies are somewhat strange for the situation of things. As this comedy is played, we find Foigard most absurdly introduced to speak of the robbery as being told to him, tho' the audience has already seen him in presence of the same characters placed as a guard over the thieves; this, by the author, was put into the Frenchman's mouth; however, a slight alteration may bring propriety to the priest; only making him enter  
with

with—*Arra, sure there has been another robbery—* then the mention of Boniface falls in aptly.

Cherry's billetdoux shows honest attachment, and sure never was so contemptible a return made for generosity, as Archer's disposing of such a girl; with two thousand pounds fortune, to be Gipsy's successor in Dorinda's service.

The scene of separation between Sullen and his wife has a peculiar degree of humour, and delineates both the characters pleasantly: upon Sullen's refusing to refund his lady's fortune, Archer makes a most extraordinary proposition; first, with respect to the ten thousand pounds Aimwell resigns in his favour, then by putting the squire's bank notes and writings into Sir Charles's hands; these bank notes, &c. we find, were taken by Mr. Gibbet; how Archer came by them we do not so clearly perceive, unless he picks his pocket when first seized; but allowing he does, as may be justifiable, what right does that give him over the papers, that he should lay ten thousand pounds mortgage on them? and how amazing a compliance is the squire's acquiescence to such a demand? Instead of saying his head, I think, he should reply, "my pocket aches consumedly;" but all of a sudden, he grows the best-natured brute imaginable, and invites them to be as merry as they please in his house and at his expence.

If wit be an essential of comedy, this piece is certainly deficient in that point; for we find scarce any of ~~those~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~unstudied~~ <sup>by surprise</sup> ~~flashes~~ of imagination which claim that title; however, the dialogue is easy, spirited

spirited and natural throughout, well varied, and well adapted to the several characters; the humour forcible, and maintained without descending too low; the characters well grouped, and the scenes arranged with judgment; yet it is to be lamented, that there are few moral sentiments, that the plot is in many places reduced to pitiful expedients for support; that the principal man and woman are despicable wretches; that human nature is shewn in a very unfavourable light; that several passages raise gross ideas; that the voluntary divorce is absurd; that Archer and Mrs. Sullen are left in a very unsatisfactory, or offensive state; that the whole piece is totally without a moral; and that the four following conclusive lines have no meaning at all, or else a very bad one;

Both happy in their several states we find,  
 Those parted by consent, and those conjoin'd;  
 Consent, if mutual, saves the lawyer's fee;  
 Consent is law enough to set you free.

Thus Mr. Farquhar dissolves the marriage-knot, with as much ease and expedition as Alexander did the Gordian of old; one would think his method had been pretty generally inculcated, and was well received among the great world at present.

In respect of characters we perceive, that Archer is a gay, sensible, gallant, but unprincipled, young fellow; whose chief wish is to repair a shattered fortune, and obtain pleasure at any rate, hazarding honesty for the one, and social, as well as moral obligation for the other; his attack upon Cherry may pass, but his romantic one upon Mrs. Sullen

Sullen is absurd as well as vicious ; the view of gain, one main point, is in no shape answered there ; yet notwithstanding these objections, he is a very agreeable, and therefore dangerous dramatic object ; vices should never be dressed up in pleasing colours ; however, such he is drawn by the author, and now we shall merely consider him in the mode of action.

The attributes for supporting this part, are vivacity of deportment, significancy of look, and pert volubility of expression ; every one of which Mr. GARRICK possessing, it is no wonder his performance should be capital ; the scenes in which he particularly outstrips competition are those with Cherry—where he delivers lady Howd'ye's message, and the picture scene with Mrs. Sullen.

Mr. SMITH is very sprightly, agreeable and characteristic ; nor is Mr. LEE without considerable merit ; but still we must insist that Mr. GARRICK, both as footman and gentleman, maintains his usual great superiority, tho' not so much as where more forceable powers are wanting.

I have been so unfortunate as to see Mr. SHERIDAN walk through this character ; and have heard of Mr. Mossop's undertaking it ; but the report cannot be true, as it must nearly reduce him to the state of the King of the Antipodes in Cronon, that is making a topsy-turvy part of it, and standing upon his head.

Aimwell, who is only a plain, unaffected gentleman, found better support by far from Mr. Ross and the late Mr. PALMER, than from any other

person I have seen ; Sullen is well enough in the hands of Mess. GIBSON and BURTON ; but was indescribably better in possession of Mr. QUIN, nay of Mr. LUKE SPARKS ; Mr. LOVE exhibits the ignorant, jocund effrontery of Boniface equal to any one I have ever seen ; and Mr. MOODY is extreme-characteristic in Foigard ; yet I must be of opinion, that if criticism would enjoy a feast of originality from the Hibernian priest, it must be found in the performance of Mr. SPARKS, now at Drury-lane.

Scrub is a very marked and striking character, simple yet cunning, forward tho' timid ; a tattler affecting secrecy ; and a fool assuming wisdom ; his situations are happily grotesque, and pregnant with much pleasantry ; a performer must have very faint comic powers who cannot keep an audience in good humour with this part ; and yet some very capital ones have run wild ; Mr. THE. CIBBER gained applause, but entirely from making droll faces ; Mr. WOODWARD took the same path, with some variations for the better ; Mr. SHUTER also has the fault of being rather too comical ; while Mr. WESTON, by an admirable naivete of performance, most certainly stands unrivalled in the part, and throws all elaborate, mechanical acting far behind.

As to the ladies, the old one is a very good woman, but neither here nor there in action ; Mrs. Sullen has been sufficiently animadverted on to shew that she is very censurable, yet she must always gain attention and respect from an audience ; Mrs. PRITCHARD and Mrs. WOFFINGTON had each  
great

great merit in this part, but undoubtedly preference was due to the former; who, with a figure less happily adapted, and less vivacity, still preserved the character, without rendering the licentious passages so offensively intelligible; or dwindling so much into the affected coquette; of living performers, I can only say, that Mrs. BARRY gives satisfaction upon very just principles; yet I must own a wish to see Mrs. ABINGTON, who is happily devoted to comedy, and that alone, in possession of this part; first because her attributes are extremely suitable; and next, because the small number of characters she plays, does not often enough gratify the public desire of seeing her: in respect of Mrs. LESSINGHAM, who performs it at Covent-garden, I wish her a better income off the stage than she makes on it; and should be very glad to see Mrs. BULKLEY fill up her present cast; which, tho' confined, is of too much consequence to be dallied with.

Dorinda is amiable, but not interesting; what could be made of her was to be found in the placid, modest sensibility of Mrs. PALMER, who, tho' she never could equal great undertakings, always made seconds of this kind pleasingly respectable: every thing we wish for in Cherry Miss POPE furnishes; but Miss WARD, tho' she means well, is far too faint.

## THE RECRUITING OFFICER.

A COMEDY. By FARQUHAR.

**T**HE opening of this comedy is peculiar in two respects ; first, as no other begins in the same manner ; and next, as its title is verified in the first scene ; there is one essential towards drawing characters in a masterly manner, a strict intimacy with, and a thorough knowledge of the station of life represented ; this requisite Mr. Farquhar thoroughly possessed in the piece under consideration ; the military life he not only liked, but was himself immediately connected with ; therefore we may naturally suppose his portraits drawn from striking likenesses, and are highly finished ; however, as examination will prove this point, either for or against the author, better than supposition, let us proceed to a candid trial.

The character of a good recruiting serjeant is as complicate for low policy, or more so, than any other ; he must have smoothness and volubility of tongue, seeming generosity, professed good-nature, pliable compliance to flatter different tempers, unblushing confidence, unbounded lies, a still conscience, and an unfeeling heart ; these qualifications must be the test of Kite's character.

The first speech of this non-commissioned officer to the mob, is a masterly piece of military elocution ; it touches with strong propriety upon those  
3
points

points most likely to impress the simple, the idle, and the dissolute; introducing himself to Costar Pearmain, by offering his cap to try on, and the countryman's apprehensions of such an experiment are highly in character; the serjeant's account of the bed of honour, the recruit's disgust at being saluted by the title of brother, and his being soothed into good humour by some compliments thrown out upon the importance of his figure, render this scene highly pleasing.

Captain Plume is well introduced, as hearing his own drum; but he appears to have a strange idea of smart riding and expedition, when he speaks of one hundred and twenty miles in thirty hours; in the ensuing scene, Kite preserves his character of humour, and throws out some excellent strokes in mentioning the recruits he has picked up; one in particular conveys just satire, tho' perhaps not generally understood; speaking of a Welsh parson he has enlisted, the captain asks, "Can he write?" to which Kite replies, "Hum, he plays rarely upon the fiddle;" this alludes to a scandalous circumstance then common, and I fear now to be met with too often among curates in Wales; I mean stipends so low as ten pounds a year, which occasioned many to work as day labourers; but the most usual method of eking out such pitiful allowances was to keep hedge-alehouses, and every Sunday-afternoon, in particular, to amuse their parishioners with some tunes on the fiddle: the circumstance of Mrs. Molly at the Castle seems to have no connection with the piece, except to show



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show some part of Plume's character, and to give a hint of the shadows which frequently fill up military muster rolls.

Worthy whose name is no otherwise exemplified in his character than as a tame and we may add a simple lover; opens the important secret of his being in love; and Plume with much pleasantry rallies the romantic swain, throwing out some usefull observations upon love policy; but whatever justice there may be in the following piece of advice; it is very unbefitting the due reserve of a stage; the captain speaking of what he would do to win a coy mistress, speaks thus "the very first thing that I would do, should be to lie with her chambermaid; and hire three or four wenches in the neighbourhood to report I had got them with child"—nor is a passage some lines after more justifiable, where mentioning Sylvia, the honourable captain declares he would have debauched her if he could, and continues—"she was a pert obstinate fool and would lose her maidenhead her own way"—the anecdote of Sylvia's sending ten guineas to Mrs Molly does credit to her feelings; and places her in esteem of the audience before she makes her appearance.

In the next scene the ladies are very well contrasted, Melinda's affectation of refined notions is very genteely repulsed by Sylvia, who pleasingly blends good sense with vivacity—if any double entendre is allowable; the following would certainly appear so but for the luscious intimation of theatric expression; and the gross enforcement of Melinda's reply—Sylvia says—"I can do every thing with my father  
but

but drink and shoot flying ; and I am sure I can do every thing my mother could—were I put to the trial”—to this her friend, without much delicacy, rejoins “ —you are in a fair way of being put to it ; for I am told your captain is come to town”—another passage in Melinda’s part of this scene is to me highly censurable ; to Sylvia’s declaration of being tired of her sex the expective lady replies—“ you are tired of an appendix to our sex, that you cant so handsomely get rid of in petticoats, as if you were in breeches!”—the succeeding. altercation between the female friends is extremely well devised, and supported with much vivacity—the retorts arise naturally from each other, and run into pit pat dialogue which adequately performed, cannot fail to please.

Sylvia’s retreat is well timed to prevent excess, but a remark of Lucy’s after she goes off is infamously gross—Melinda proposes this question “ did you not see the proud nothing how she swelled upon the arrival of her fellow ?” to which she receives the following answer from her maid, who seems replete with the same ideas as her delicate mistress. “ Her fellow has not been here long enough to occasion any great swelling” yet this and the other exceptionable passages I have pointed out might be very easily softened ; or if entirely omitted would be no loss in point of Wit or humour.

Justice Ballance who opens the second act with Plume speaks in the true English stile, for it is certain that the people of this island in general bear the taxes occasioned by war with great spirit, when their fleets and armies furnish the news papers with a violent

lent effusion of blood ; which some may interpret as a mark of national inhumanity, but rather appears to me the effect of a noble spirit, which pants for superiority in the fields of fame, and sacrifices weaker feelings to principles of glory.

Plume's frequent mention of Sylvia interrupts the justice's political bent pleasingly ; and when Ballance speaks of a dishonourable design upon Sylvia, as no more than similar to what he once had himself on a country gentleman's daughter ; the captain's distinction between a friend and a stranger shews gratitude with delicacy of principle ; but flatly contradicts his declaration to Worthy already noted ; which avows the design he here disclaims.

Sylvia is well introduced and the justice called upon conveniently to leave her with Plume ; their encounter is polite and delicate ; but tho' the author seems to have meant a refined compliment in the circumstance of the captain's will ; I cannot consider it as any other than a very suspicious one ; had it been sent to her on the eve of the battle, provisionally ; it would have been what she calls it ; but to be the bearer of it himself, to make personal mention takes off much of the obligation ; the lady's hint of his little boy at the castle is arch and pleasant, and Plume's following confusion very natural.

Justice Ballance after speaking of his son's death addresses his daughter with much intentional affection and prudent propriety, intimating that as her fortune is increased from fifteen hundred pounds only, to twelve hundred a year estate ; he expects her views should be more extended, and desires her to think,

no more of captain plume—when we say that the justice here speaks with propriety we only mean as a man of the world ; for it is plain that the vanity of family connections chiefly influences him, which many a father ere now has mistaken for happiness ; besides if, as he says he could like Plume as a mere son in law to receive fifteen hundred pounds portion, it is mean and mercenary to think him unworthy the same lady with twenty thousand ; nor can we conceive what idea he must have of his daughter's mind, to suppose she could from such principles shake off regard for a man she has entertained upon favourable terms—the favour asked, that Sylvia will never marry without his consent ; and his promise never to dispose of her without her own, are strokes which give agreeable sensations to a feeling mind.

Melinda's letter, which she hints at the end of the first act, starts some motives of perplexity by alarming the justice with apprehensions of Plume's design upon his daughter, and the old gentleman's sentiments in consequence of it are very spirited ; but we apprehend there are two intrusions upon decorum in the scene with Worthy ; first Ballance's charging him with privacy to Plume's dishonourable intentions ; and then refusing his author, which is cruelty to an innocent person ; nor does it appear from the letter that he is enjoined secrecy ; next Worthy's defending to such a pitifull discovery as picking up a bit of a torn letter, undoubtedly if a man of spirit heard an injurious report raised he would becominly insist upon an explanation ; if the matter did not claim

such serious procedure, the same spirit would set him above peeping into fragments of paper—the explanation arising from the matter makes Melinda's letter rather an excrecence, than essential to the plot.

Kite and the two recruits succeed very happily to enliven the latter part of this act, which we must consider as rather dull in the preceding scenes; the song, the description of a soldier's importance, giving the recruits titles of dignity and introducing the listing money under colour of being the king's picture are all admirably well imagined; the serjeant's explanation of Carolus too is truly laughable; Plume's joining in their mirth and the countryman's spirit of keeping on his hat to shew independence are suitably in character; Kite's roughness before his officer on their mention of going home, and the captain's interposition on the side of Pearmain and Apple-tree is a true piece of recruiting policy, which while it promotes humour in the scene carries on successfully the design of securing the men as volunteers; the finesse of giving them their choice to go or stay after chastising the serjeant is excellent; as is also the stroke of setting Coster to inveigle his simple companion.

The merit of this scene lies in a very judicious, humorous contrast of characters who well know life, playing upon the simplicity of those who do not; and it is so much in nature that a thorough acquaintance with it, among young fellows in the country, would certainly much impede the success of recruiting men-catchers.

Plume

Plume and Worthy commence the third act with a scene, no further worth notice than as it shews Plume to have a commendable indifference for a woman, whom he supposes alter'd in her affection by a fresh acquisition of fortune ; and his gallanting the country market girl, Rose, to prove his freedom of heart, is a very pleasing pretty incident ; indeed every one of the characters contribute to heighten and assist each other, and the story which Kite trumps up to engage Bullock's attention, while the captain takes off his sister, is a circumstance of high wrought humour ; Bullock's complaint to the justice concerning Rose, furnishes a very laughable scene.

The policy of introducing new characters in the third act, which was remarked upon in the STRATAGEM, is here used to very good purpose ; Bullock and Rose have been already brought forward, as seasonable enliveners of the action and dialogue ; a third now appears, the facetious Captain Brazen, for whom I doubt not there were many originals in Farquhar's time, and I could point out several of very similar features at the present day.

This military sprig, whose peculiar leading characteristic appears to be unlimited effrontery, is exhibited at his first entrance, and through the scene, with much judgment, with such strong outlines, as plainly evince a greater share of originality than imagination ; his rapid address to Worthy ; his pert observation of the justice ; the forward introduction of himself to that gentleman ; his turning the word laconick, through ignorance,

into a proper name ; and his discussion upon t' name are ludicrously whimsical.

The affectation of a general acquaintance ; the boast of courage, and the rhapsodical spirited narration concerning Frank Plume of Northamptonshire, are excellent ingredients to characterize the empty, opinionated coxcomb ; and Brazen's departure so consonant to his entrance dismisses him with glee.

Rose exhibits a very natural picture of that simple pride and pleasure which we may suppose possesses the heart of an unsuspecting country girl upon being addressed by such a man as Plume ; and her spirited attempts at improved behaviour before the justice are extremely pleasant, as is also the captain's attack upon her without seeing Ballance ; from whence an agreeable confusion arises, which terminates the scene laughably.

Modest Mrs. Melinda, and her modest maid Lucy next make their appearance ; the former, in her second speech, utters a sentiment which we may pronounce the essence of infamy, " Flanders lace  
" is as constant a present from officers to their  
" women, as something else is from their women  
" to them ;" and the latter replies in a very knowing strain, which her mistress takes care to enforce by explanation ; in short, as this scene has no tendency but raising offensive ideas, I wish and recommend the omission of it : Brazen, in his address to the lady, and rhodomontade declarations, presents a diverting peculiarity of character ; and Melinda's  
en-

encouragement of him, to mortify Worthy, suits well a coquettish heart.

Plume's tipsy condition varies the action and dialogue of his character seasonably, giving him an additional supply of spirit and humour ; but Worthy's setting on Plume to recover Melinda from his rival, and sheering off, as if afraid to plead his own cause, shew that gentleman in a very strange light, either fool or coward at least ; the encounter between Plume and Brazen is whimsically imagined, and generally gives satisfaction ; the fighting swain comes in conveniently to take off his condescending mistress, who kindly flies to him when apprehensive of danger, and without any other retreat for safety.

Sylvia appears at this point of time metamorphosed into the appearance of a young fellow, a circumstance not very consistent with delicate reserve, nor even common modesty, tho' authorized by many examples in private life, and frequently adopted on the stage ; when Shakespeare wrote, no woman appeared on the stage, therefore Rosalind, Imogen, Portia, &c. were well calculated ; but at present, I imagine plots might be carried on upon more probable principles of deception ; in this state, however, Sylvia makes a very agreeable figure, and plays upon the rival officers with great archness ; in their several offers we find the author exhibiting keen satire against the army, when Brazen says, " you shall receive your pay, and do no duty," the lady makes this very poignant return, " then you must make me a field officer," and a little lower there is a most excellent stroke against making men



of little education and less religion, military chaplains.

Kite's method of introducing and recommending himself to the supposed recruit is highly artful, and taking her off while the captains are engaged a good method of terminating the rencounter without bloodshed; as to Plume's distinction of fighting for a man, and not for a woman, it appears to me irreconcilable; an affront is the spur to honour, and to a man of spirit comes with equal force from every quarter, and without an affront, no one of real courage will draw his sword.

Rose's communication of her interest with Plume to Sylvia in the first scene in the fourth act, is well introduced to alarm that lady with jealousy; and her method of sounding Plume's real disposition towards the girl, is natural; Bullock, tho' he has but a small share of the dialogue, greatly enlivens it with three or four humorous remarks.—I could wish Sylvia's reply to Rose, when she says, will "you be so kind to me, Sir, as the captain would," was more consistent with the character of a young lady; Plume's explanation of his design in gallanting Rose, is satisfactory to his mistress, and exculpates him from a blameable intention upon unsuspecting innocence, Sylvia again goes too far, when she says to Plume, "lie with a common soldier! would not you rather lie with a common woman?"

Melinda and Lucy, in their short scene, drop some expressions similar to those we have remarked upon already—Worthy, who, as it appears, shewed

showed a little resentment when the lady put herself under his protection ; comes possessed with the same feeling, and plays upon her passion with some degree of good sense, which draws her into the dilemma of behaving like a virago, and produces an unexpected, undesigned reception to Brazen, which is the only material circumstances arising from the interview between the lady and her two lovers.

Kite's appearance and conduct as a fortune-teller, is a most satyrical burlesque upon the credulity of those weak minded persons who believe in the predictive knowledge of such gentry ; his appropriation of the sun, moon, and deities, to terrestrial circumstances and stations, is a whimsical bam up on heathen mythology ; that succession of characters the author originally brought forward in this scene is now much, and very properly curtailed in representation ; to confess the truth, except some little use to the plot, and a joke or two about the Devil under the table, there is nothing deserving notice in what remains.

Plume's discovery of Melinda's being the cause that Sylvia was sent into the country, occurs agreeably ; and the compliments he pays the fair sex for having entertained an injurious opinion of her, deserve rather a better epithet than pretty ; however, I could wish they had not been twisted into rhyme, but Mr. WILKES loved to speak an epilogue to every act, and as he pleased the audience, Farquhar thought it a duty to please him.

At the beginning of the fifth act we find Sylvia

via in custody, and brought before the justice, as it appears, for seducing Rose; her intimacy with military weddings is not very characteristic, for a young lady of fortune and genteel education; and when she speaks of paying whores with a pinch, it is still a greater trespass on due bounds; indeed the whole scene means little, and but for honest Bullock, would be very insipid.

Melinda and Worthy, according to conjuror Kite's prediction, meet, when after some altercation, in which he charges her with cruelty, and she him, with base designs upon her virtue, which he repents not having put in practice; they patch up a strange, unprincipled accommodation; the three ensuing scenes contain small matter of entertainment, nor is that of the justices and recruits much to be admired; Sylvia's behaviour before the bench, is consistent with her design of provoking them to press her; yet, some of her remarks might as well have been omitted, particularly that when the constable charges her with a rape, and receives this reply, "is it your wife or daughter, booby? I ravished them both yesterday."

Brazen's rencounter with Worthy; their ferocious intentions; their battle and no battle, with Lucy's method of dissipating the storm shew the author hard set to accomplish his catastrophe, which is still more plainly evinced by Ballance's short interview with his steward; the remainder of this act hurries on without any manner of spirit, humour, intricacy or surprize.

To

To consider the plot of this comedy in general, we shall find it vague, unconnected, and depending on very low shifts, the fragment of a torn letter being a main instrument; one remarkable incongruity is, that Sylvia should appear in a suit of her brother's cloaths before her father without discovery, though we find, on the steward's bare mention of those cloaths, he immediately sees into the deception; Silvia's contrivance of being given to Plume as a recruit, is a pitiful, equivocal method of keeping her promise given in the second act, that she would never give herself away without her father's consent; Ballance's way of sounding whether Plume is privy to the scheme, and the captain's generous method of discharging the supposed recruit, to oblige his friend, are circumstances of merit. All the under-plot of Lucy is a mere make-shift, and utterly contemptible.

Plume is an agreeable well drawn character; sensible, easy and spirited; possessed of courage without being fond of shewing it; feeling to love yet free from amorous weakness, gallant but not vicious; liberal in sentiment, unaffected in expression, and disengaged in action; a credit to his author and a compliment to the army; considered in this amiable light it is not to be wondered that so few performers hit him off happily in representation; the ease of an accomplished gentleman, and the milder virtues are much more difficult to exhibit pleasingly, than low humour, strong passions or fashionable vices—a very humane honest man may assume successfully the tyrant or villain in full contrast to his own nature.

ture ; but it is impossible to put on the port and demeanour of a gentleman, unless the actor is really one, at least, in external appearance ; the late Mr. PALMER was much respected in this part, and indeed for the drunken scene, deserved extensive applause ; but in all the rest, had far too great a taint of the coxcomb, which was so very natural to him in private life, that he could hardly ever shake it off on the stage. Mr. RYAN, under the heavy disadvantages of advanced years and a most unfavourable voice, supported the captain with characteristic spirit, but we must give Mr. SMITH an undoubted superiority for uniform ease, elegance and suitable vivacity ; being the unaffected gentleman in private life, he is necessarily so on the stage ; and it may with critical justice be said, that he is both as much and as little of an actor in this part, as any one who ever undertook it.

Mr. LEE figured Plume extremely well, and had considerable merit in performing it ; but from laborious attempts, which are usual with him, to make more of the character than the author intended, he abated much of that pleasure the propriety of more spontaneous action must give in this part.

Brazen is very happily contrasted to his brother-officer ; free without ease, talkative without sense, vain without consequence, full of false fire, yet not without some sparks of real courage ; Farquhar in drawing this military coxcomb, has preserved due respect for the army ; he has indeed rendered him ridiculous, but not contemptible ; we may laugh  
at

at his follies, but cannot frown at his vices, for unless some few harmless invasions of truth, to flatter his own vanity, may be deemed vice, he does not appear to have any ; as a gallant, he appears more venal than affectionate ; as a companion, more diverting than rational, and as a man, more made up of unpremeditated whim, than subtile design.

THE. CIBBER was by no means insipid in this part, but he often pleased upon wrong principles, particularly here ; as he ran into the evident absurdity of adding Abel Drugger's grimace to the elegant deportment of Foppington ; both which are totally inconsistent with Brazen, and utterly incongruous to each other ; the smart and the beau are each a distinct species of foppery, and should be carefully marked.

Mr. WOODWARD, as in every thing he does, displays much pleasantry ; yet, like the last mentioned gentleman, makes us laugh in contradiction to judgment, by using a sententious quaintness of expression instead of the precipitate, snip-snap, rhapsodical mode of utterance, as is plainly intended for the character ; we must also lament, as we shall often have occasion to do, that so many of Harlequin's misplaced, pantomimical beauties should be transplanted with such unlimited luxuriance into the chaster scenes of comedy.

After saying thus much of two capital comedians, I hope it will not be thought partial to remark, that Mr. O'BRIEN's person, manner, and executive powers displayed the true *je ne sçai quoi* of acting ; and that criticism had very little left to wish for

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even on his first appearance, though a more ticklish part never fell to the lot of a young beginner.

Balance is a consistent, sensible, worthy country-gentleman, and, as drawn, much more becoming a commission of the peace than many real magistrates ; in performance, no peculiar excellence can be expected ; however, Mr. QUIN made him extremely respectable, and Mr. SPARKS was several degrees above any present competitor ; many parts assist the actor, but this is one of a larger number which lie heavy on him ; therefore doing it justice claims the greater merit.

Serjeant Kite, with moderate executive abilities, must please, as he speaks to the feelings in every line ; there appears little difficulty in representation, and yet most, who have undertaken him, vary from strict propriety ; some turn him into a noisy bully, and others into a subtle sycophant : that he is partly comprized of both we own, yet they should be so blended that neither may visibly predominate ; his cunning should soften his consequence, and self-sufficiency render his art plausible. Mr. BERRY—a good actor in some things—was here heavy to a degree ; Mr. ANDERSON quite insipid ; nor is Mr. MORRIS, though nearer the mark by far, what we could wish.

Bullock need not seek for a more adequate friend than Mr. DUNSTALL ; as to the Recruits, they are laughable simpletons, that seldom fail of proper effect ; to distinguish any in these parts, where all we have seen are so much upon a level, would be partial, and setting down the whole would be giving an unnecessary

necessary catalogue of names, most of which are but little and some not at all known.

Worthy, who in no degree deserves his name, being void, as far as we see, of virtue as well as vice, is such an unseasoned water-gruel, tame, pitiful lover, that he must be an estimable performer who shields him from absolute contempt, which by a well-adapted placidity of performance, Mr. HULL agreeably effects, having judgment to inform him where mediocrity is merit.

Sylvia, the capital lady, has spirit and sense; but the former runs her into female quixotism, and the latter often dwindles into licentiousness; her disguise and the situation it consequently throws her into is very indelicate; the scheme by which she obtains her wishes, wild, improbable, and culpable—yet while Mrs. WOFFINGTON filled this character, there was not a more agreeable one on the stage, equally *degagée* in the female and male semblance, she ravished in both; rendering even absurdities pleasing by the elegance of her appearance and vivacity of her expression; as far as her figure would admit, Mrs. PRITCHARD was excellent: at present, Miss MACKLIN justly enjoys a considerable share of reputation in it, having spirit of expression, sensibility of look, delicacy of emphasis, and gentility of deportment.

Melinda is a vicious heap of inconsistencies, with a shallow head and bad heart, without a single circumstance or speech worth notice, except some which call for censure; I never saw any body exhibit her who deserved the least mention in criticism;



cism ; Lucy is an obscure, worthless engine of the under-plot—Rose is a pleasing, well-drawn picture of rural innocence and humourous simplicity ; in performance, I shall say just the same of her as of Cherry in the Stratagem.

The unities of time and place are tolerably well preserved in this comedy ; but the plot has no trace of a moral, and the catastrophe is huddled up without any degree of poetical justice—Sylvia, by the bye, a dangerous lesson for young ladies—in consequence of hazarding her virtue, obtains her wishes—Melinda gains the man she has used infamously, and Worthy gets the woman he would have debauched ; while poor, inoffensive Brazen is left, unrepining, to solace himself with twenty recruits instead of twenty thousand pounds : in short, it appears that our author, whose dialogue is unaffected and pleasant, considered entertainment more than instruction ; so that I shall venture to affirm, the Recruiting Officer, though it may make us merry, both in the closet and on the stage, will never leave any useful impressions from either.

## M A C B E T H.

Written by SHAKESPEARE.

**P**Reternatural beings afford the widest, most luxuriant field for genius to sport, and ideas to vegetate in; of this being truly sensible, and willing to give his muse of fire unlimited scope, Shakespeare has in several pieces availed himself, but in none more powerfully than the tragedy now before us; however, though critically we must admire that characteristic peculiarity of sentiment and expression which distinguish the Witches, it is nevertheless necessary to remark, that exhibiting such personages and phantoms, as never had any existence but in credulous or heated imaginations, tends to impress superstitious feelings and fears upon weak minds; for which reason, I consider every dramatic piece which treats the audience with a ghost, fairy or witch, as improper for young, unexperienced spectators in particular; if, as is well known, old women's stories of such, impress a timidity upon every child who hears their terrifying tales, a timidity which lasts to the conclusion of life; may we not infer apprehensions of their having a more forceable effect from being realized on the stage.

It may be said; that interdicting such poetical auxiliaries would cramp genius, and deprive us of many unparalleled beauties; to this the answer is plain, that nothing which has not a good effect, or  
at

at least an inoffensive tendency should be deemed beautiful, or stand in estimation.

From what is thus premised, we hope, no other charge will be laid against Shakespeare, than the barbarous and credulous taste of the times in which he wrote, and to which he submitted, with possibly an oblique design of flattering the favourite opinion of James the first; yet allowing this to be really the case, it cannot exculpate his preternatural beings, as such, from rational censure for the reasons assigned above, notwithstanding the author had historical tradition to countenance his introduction of them; after this general, and, we hope, just objection against the weird sisters, we are to take the piece as it stands, and consider distinctly its several component parts.

Macbeth commences with all the apparatus of terror—a storm! a desert! and three withered hags of little less than infernal appearance; their short conference is full of meaning, and a kind of oracular obscurity; their sudden disappearance gains a desire in the spectators to see them again, and to know in what sort of business such extraordinary agents are to be employed; but I know not why they should sink under the stage, immediately after pronouncing these words, “*Hover through the fog and*” “*filthy air.*”

The King's appearance to hear an account of the battle; that account, related by a wounded officer, with such energy of description, and so much to the honour of Duncan's generals; are good preparations to possess us of the heroic  
part

part of Macbeth's character—but why this express of victory should be sent by so imperfect a messenger as one, whose wounds, yet green, wanted the assistance of a surgeon, I cannot think; if the whole relation had come from Ross, it would have been rather more suitable, and would have given his character somewhat more importance.

The witches, at their next meeting, question each other concerning their several employments, and the replies shew them pregnant with that diabolic malevolence which is charged against them; the threats vented against the sailor, whose wife had refused one of them chestnuts, strike every feeling mind with sympathetic terror; their preparation for Macbeth has something mystically solemn in it.

The notice taken of these odd appearances by Banquo, is such as would naturally occur to a man of sense and spirit; and their alternate climax of congratulation to Macbeth much in character; him they hail in plain and positive terms of prophecy, which throws him, very judiciously, into a state of silent and confused reflection; the author well knew, that no words at this period would equal the more suitable speech of countenance and action; therefore makes Banquo, whose open, disinterested heart takes no alarm, fill up a well-adapted pause of the principal character, by questioning the sisters concerning himself; their replies to him are flattering, but ænigmatical, and seem to rouse Macbeth to a curiosity of further information, which, however, is properly checked, for this time, by the departure of the Witches: in his speech to them,

there appears an observation inconsistent with what is mentioned in the preceding scene; Macbeth says,

But how of Cawdor? The thane of Cawdor lives  
A *prosperous* gentleman.

An unsuccessful rebel taken prisoner, as Cawdor must be, by Duncan's sentencing of him to death, could not justly be called *prosperous*, especially by the general who has lately overthrown him, but this is by no means a material lapse; what we find a little further on, shews more strange confusion, when Macbeth observes, that Cawdor lives, and asks,

Why do you dress me in his borrow'd robes?  
Angus makes this reply,

—— Who was the thane yet lives,  
But under heavy judgment bears that life,  
Which he deserves to lose—whether he was  
Comb'd with Norway, or did line the rebel  
With hidden help and vantage; or, that with both  
He labour'd in his country's wreck, I know not;  
But treasons capital, confess'd, and prov'd,  
Have overthrown him.

It is worthy of remark, that Angus was present when Ross particularised Cawdor's rebellious conduct to the king, notwithstanding he here expresses such ignorance of the cause of his impeachment.

Macbeth's feelings upon this unexpected acquisition, verifying in part the prediction which has been so lately pronounced to him, the dawnings of ambition which break out upon his unconnected meditation, are extremely natural; but his adverting to murder, for obtaining the state of royalty in  
view

view, shew him much too susceptible of villainous impressions.

There are many circumstances and events to bring about the most unthought of changes in human affairs, wherefore that man who premeditates the worst means at first, must have by nature a deep depravation of heart; and such Macbeth will appear infected with from the whole of that speech which begins "Two truths are told," &c. notwithstanding somewhat like palliation is offered in two or three lines; indeed his conclusion seems to banish what he beautifully stiles *fantastical murther*; but cannot banish from spectators his barbarous ideas so suddenly conceived; I have dwelt upon this circumstance to strengthen my opinion, that the author meant to draw him a detestable monster, which some critics have rather disputed, allowing him a generous disposition, which we find no instance of; even the conscientious struggles which we shall presently find him engaged with, might arise in the most villainous nature—he who does a bad action precipitately, or without knowing it to be such, may stand in some measure excuseable; but when a man has scrupulously weighed every relative circumstance in the nicest scale of reflection; and after all determines upon what nature, gratitude and justice, would avoid, he must be composed of the worst materials.

To corroborate the general idea of Macbeth's character, which I have here offered, and which will be enlarged upon when we go through the whole piece; let us view him in the very next scene, where

after a most cordial reception from the king, with unbounded promises of future favours, he is so possessed of his base purpose, that, void of even common gratitude, he replies, upon Duncan's appointing Malcolm prince of Cumberland,

The prince of Cumberland ! that is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'er-leap :  
For in my way it lies—Stars hide your fires,  
Let not night see my black and deep desires ;  
The eye wink at the end—yet let that be,  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

From this passage it appears, that not content with the simple idea of regicide, he determines to cut off the whole family, in return for being loaded with honours by royal favour ; and at the very instant, when this unsuspecting monarch and friend places himself upon his hospitable reception ; if this does not prove Macbeth an exception to the satirist's remark, *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*, I do not know what can,

Lady Macbeth, and her husband's letter, are judiciously introduced, but sure such sympathetic barbarity was never in nature, as suddenly, on the instant, breaks out in these words,

Glamis thou art and Cawdor—and shalt be  
What thou art promised.

What follows accuses Macbeth of a milky softness in his nature, of which he does not seem at all possessed ; for unsuccessful struggles of conscience cannot justly be called so ; however, that he may not have the whole load of aggravated guilt to bear alone, our author has made this matchless lady—  
I lament so detestable, though a possible picture of the  
fair

fair sex—exert uncommon talents of temptation; on hearing of the king's visit, with most unrelenting precipitation of thought, she dooms the royal visitant—Her invocation to spirits of evil influence is worthy of a powerful imagination, and Macbeth's interruptive entrance, extremely well timed, but we must offer some doubt whether the word *blanket* of the dark, does not convey a low and improper idea.

Macbeth's mention of Duncan's approach without making any previous reply to his wife's cordial reception, is a natural effect of what fits nearest his heart; and her coming to the main point at once, is well devised for working him up to her great purpose; her confining the sentiment of murder in less than a line, and warning him to disguise those looks which appear too intelligible, impresses us with a strong idea of her policy, as does her second hint of Duncan's death, and promising to take a great part of the dreadful business on herself.

The short scene before the castle has nothing material in it, except the following truly poetical remark made by Banquo;

— This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve  
By his lov'd masonry, that heav'n's breath  
Smells wooingly here—No jutting freeze,  
Buttrice, nor coigne of 'vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendant bed, and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd,  
The air is delicate.

Lady Macbeth's strained compliment to the king has also merit, as being natural, no truth being  
more



more certain that treacherous hypocrisy ever strives to wear the fairest smiles.

In such a state of guilty perturbation as Macbeth now appears, no mode of expression could be so suitable as that of soliloquy; it were to be wished, however, that our great author, pursuing energy, had not in some sentences border'd upon obscurity, especially if we consider those passages as only repeated on the stage, where the ear must inevitably be too quick for conception: in an alteration of this play, which has been often played, there are some attempts to render the lines I speak of more intelligible, but, like most other paraphrases, they destroy the essential spirit.

The reflection, that if he could but gain ease even in this life, he would jump the life to come, is rather wildly impious; but the inevitable temporal punishment of a conscience loaded with guilt is very well and commendably inculcated; the arguments for declining the murder are so forceable, that nothing but the most hardened heart, under such conviction, would proceed—Where he personifies pity, and mounts her astride on the *blast*, fancy takes a very vigorous flight, nor does expression fall beneath, yet I am afraid they leave propriety behind, the following lines are in my opinion very exceptionable.

—— I have no spur

To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'er-leaps itself  
*And falls on the other.*

To embody *intention*, that ~~ambition~~ may be a *spear* to prick its sides, leans towards the burlesque; and then turning the *spear* into another body, that it may vault over, instead of gaining the *saddle* of *intent*, corroborates this idea; indeed this speech should always end at

The deep damnation of his taking off.

For pity—heaven's cherubim and ambition, all upon the full gallop, are strained figures at least; not at all adapted to a man deliberating upon one of the foulest, most important murders he could commit.

Lady Macbeth comes to speak in rather plainer terms; yet, unless we allow great latitude of expression, what follows evidently admits of objection.

— Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since,  
And wakes it now to look so pale and sickly.

Suppose we pass over the literal acceptation of *hope* being drunk, surely we must blame a lady of high rank for descending to such a vulgar and nauseous allusion as the paleness and sickness of an inebriated state; nor is her comparison of the cat in the adage much more the effect of good breeding.

Macbeth's reply to the very gross rebuff he has just received is as concise, significant and noble a one as ever was uttered; but his bloody-minded virago's next speech, towards the conclusion, wounds humanity with such a sentiment as no woman should utter, nor any rational being hear;  
yet

yet that strange, horrid picture of dashing a smiling infant's brains out, and laying a plan for complicated destruction, occasions Macbeth to say

Bring forth men children only,  
For thy undaunted metal should compose  
Nothing but males.

Should he not rather have said,

Bring forth fierce tygers only,  
For thy relentless nature should compose  
Nothing but beasts.

If it should be urged, that such characters have been, and may be ; I still contend, that they are among the frightful deformities and essential concealments of nature, which should be excluded from the stage.

The midnight interview of Macbeth and Banquo at the beginning of the second act, very properly ushers in the dreadful business then in agitation ; that prophetic heaviness of heart mentioned by the former, his presenting a fresh mark of favour from the king to lady Macbeth, his speaking of the three weird sisters, and Macbeth's affecting to slight the remembrance of them, tho' not very obvious, are yet considerable beauties : I could heartily wish this passage did not occur

———— There's husbandry in heaven,  
Their *candles* are all out————

What a poverty of idea and expression ! yet we find the stars called *candles* by our author, in his Romeo and Juliet also—how much more worthy of himself and of his subject, is what Lorenzo calls them in the Merchant of Venice, *pattens of bright gold* ?

In

In Macbeth's soliloquy, where a visionary dagger strikes his mind's eye, the abrupt introduction of that alarming object is very judicious and beautiful; nor can any thing be more natural than the effect it has on Macbeth, which is most admirably described, and strongly impressed by a nervous succession of breaks, which, for a dozen or fourteen lines, rise into a powerful climax of confusion—the momentary pause of unclouded reason which relieves imagination from her painful load, and the quick return of coward conscience diversify the sentiment and action in a most interesting manner; the picture of midnight, as favouring witchcraft, rapes and murder, concludes this inimitable soliloquy with a due solemnity of terror; a soliloquy of such unspeakable merit, that, like charity, it may apologize for a multitude of faults.

Lady Macbeth, at her entrance, gives us a piece of information not very defensible, unless it is meant as some palliation of her character—the false fire of liquor, for which she seems to have very little occasion, must be, in her situation, rather a dangerous resource: the remainder of her speech is happily disjointed by earnest expectation and jealous apprehension.—The remark, that a likeness of her father in Duncan's sleeping appearance, prevented her from doing the business herself, lets in a gleam of humanity upon this female fiend.

The entrance of Macbeth, his high-wrought confusion, and every syllable of the ensuing scene, exhibit an unparalleled combination of judgment and genius, calculated to awake the drowsiest feel-

ings, and to alarm the most resolute heart—the picture of the grooms crying out in disturbed dreams—one “Heaven bless us, and amen the other,” with the inimitable description of sleep, and the idea of nature’s general friend being murdered in that sleep, are astonishing efforts of mental ability, and, for so much, certainly place Shakespeare beyond any degree of comparative merit.

The refusal of Macbeth to go again into the scene of blood, is an apt stroke of well-timed remorse; indeed his bringing the daggers from the place they should have been left in, is an extreme well-judged mark of confusion; however, I would rather have forfeited that instance of judgment, than have heaped such savage inhumanity upon the female; her boast of having hands crimsoned like those of her husband, carries the offensive colouring still higher: what succeeds, on the interruption of knocking, is expressed very characteristically.

To what end Shakespeare could introduce so incongruous a character as the porter, who is commendably omitted in representation, I believe no mortal can tell; at such an interesting period, to turn the most serious feelings into laughter, or rather into distaste, by a string of strained quibbles is an insult upon judgment, and must fill the imagination with a chaos of idea—Some more suitable pause might have been made to give Macbeth time for composing his ruffled figure; the short scene between him, Macduff and Lenox, is well calculated

lated ; Lenox's remarks upon the night are very consistent with those superstitious principles, on which this play is chiefly founded ; and Macduff's exclamatory entrance discovers Duncan's murder properly.

The successive entrances and exits of various characters, the real grief of some, and the feigned sorrow of others, Macbeth's apology for his political stroke of killing the grooms, by an affecting picture of Duncan's situation, and the rapid resolution of enquiring judicially into so unaccountable an event, are all well arranged and happily expressed ; but the amazing precipitate flight of Malcolm and Donalbain, without any apology, except the paltry one of instantaneous fear, places these sprigs of royalty in a contemptible light, and its effect on the stage proves the justice of this remark ; for when one says, " I'll to England," and the other comically replies, " To Ireland I," nine times out of ten, the audience are thrown into a horse-laugh.—I could wish this circumstance was altered, as it easily might be, by giving a few speeches of spirit and dutiful affection to one or both the princes, expressive of their particular determination to discover, and revenge their father's death ; which might be over-ruled by Macduff's representation of the danger they stand exposed to, and that for their greater security it would be better to retire, till the unavoidable convulsions of state were subsided, or till proper measures could be taken to establish the legal succession ; this, I apprehend, would have carried them off with some

N 2

grace,

grace, whereas in their present disposition they make such a wretched figure, that we can scarce forget it, when Malcolm appears to assert his right at the head of an army.

The continuation of omens between Ross and the old man seems to have little meaning unless to keep reflection in an unremitted state of terror ; and unusual events are carried to a very strange pitch indeed, when Ross asserts that he was eye-witness of Duncan's horses eating one another.

Macduff's account that Macbeth is already named and gone to Scone to be invested with royalty, is a great trespass on time, their being but twenty lines, or thereabouts, from the *stealing* away of the princes, as it is properly phrased, and his account of every thing being thus settled in consequence of their supposed criminal escape.

Introducing the witches at the end of the second act is a very seasonable relief to a feeling mind, from the painful weight of horror which some preceding scenes must have laid upon it ; and, in suitable music, they continue the story predictively as a kind of chorus ; their rejoicing in the mischief already done, and that which yet lies in the womb of time, shews a disposition worthy such agents as the subordinate fiends of darkness.

Banquo's reflections, with which the third act begins, are well adapted to the circumstances ; and and his doubts of Macbeth's elevation by honourable means, natural ; as is also his adverting to the prophecy in favour of his own posterity ; the new king's fresh professions of friendship to, and hospitable

table invitation of his former colleague and friend, fix, if possible, a deeper stamp of baseness on his character ; but at the same time exhibit strength of policy ; and the succeeding soliloquy points out, nervously, motives for a fresh instance of barbarity ; the firm untainted dignity of Banquo's nature, joined to the prediction of his childrens succession to the throne, are strong motives of jealousy to rouse the blood-stained usurper's unrelenting disposition, which takes the sure, though meanest method of removing his fears, by assassination.

In respect of Macbeth's scene with the murderers, I apprehend he uses too much circumlocution, especially as we perceive, by what he says at their entrance, that those ruffians have been made acquainted with a main part of the affair, Banquo's oppression of them ; being possessed of this, does it not seem more natural, that the tyrant would after this line, " We are men, my liege," immediately come to, " Both of you know, Banquo is your enemy ;" than run into the unessential, digressive, though just comparison of men and dogs ? I know it may be urged, that murderous intentions are communicated with slow and jealous caution ; this is undoubtedly the case in particular characters and circumstances.—It is masterly to make king John wind about the disposition of Hubert gradually, he being a person of some consideration and doubtful principles ; but for Macbeth to expatiate so much at large, with such fellows as he seems to pick out, appears a waste of words ;



words ; had there been any passage to indulge the author's fancy, or to favour the performer's action and utterance, then a little superfluity would stand particularly excuseable with an audience ; and find some indulgence even from a critical reader ; as the scene stands, I have ever observed it to pall in representation.

What succeeds between Macbeth and his lady is well adapted to their unavoidable perturbation ; but would have fallen in better as a continuation, than making two distinct scenes ; Macbeth's exit, after the murderers have left him is superfluous ; every thing he advances, in this short conference, shews a striking, poetical, yet natural picture of mental gloom and heart-felt agony ; his invocation of night, and description of its solemn approach, are pleasing effusions of genius.

The scene of the murderers, Banquo's fall, and Fleance's escape, is partly trifling, partly shocking, and seldom fails of proving laughable ; I wish something better had been substituted, and the circumstance referred to a relation of it by the murderer, I could also wish, that decorum had not suffered by such a ragamuffin's entrance into a room of state, amidst the whole court ; I apprehend no necessity for this, and am therefore induced to blame it.

Considering the place, hurry of spirits, &c. I am bold to censure all the following speech, except the first hemistich, and the last, marked in *Italics* ; they are much certainly as any man, so situated, would

would have said, therefore what comes between is superfluous.

*Then comes my fit again—(I had else been perfect,  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As free and general as the casing air ;  
But now I'm cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears.)—But Banquo's safe.*

Had the affair been communicated in a proper place, the disappointed usurper might have thrown out much more extended, spirited remarks on the ill-boding failure of his foremost wish ; reproaches on the murderer for executing his charge imperfectly ; execrations against fortune, for throwing any painful rubs in his way ; with other matters which might have been suggested, would have added much, at least to the acting merit of his character.

Banquo's ghost, which, without being too ludicrous, we may call the raw-head-and-bloody-bones of tragedy, is nevertheless well introduced to throw Macbeth into those violent agitations which nature must feel, and such as furnish extensive powers an almost unlimited scope to shew themselves ; the words of both Macbeth and his lady are beautifully applicable through the whole scene, which concludes, so far as the ghost is concerned, with as forceable a climax of impassioned terror as ever any author penned ; the reflections which follow, in the conclusive part of the scene, are such as naturally arise from the subject, and are nervously expressed ; Macbeth's determination to consult the witches, plainly indicates the agitation and weakness

ness of a guilty heart and a superstitious head ; I should be glad to know how he is so well acquainted with their places of rendezvous, as to know exactly the spot of consultation.

The witches receive, in the following scene, a sharp rebuke from their superior, Hecate, for dealing in any mischief which did not originally spring from her ; she delivers herself in a fanciful stile, and opens with propriety their business at the pit of Acheron.

That remarkable incantation, which begins the fourth act ; the mysterious ceremony practised ; the emblematic ingredients collected for enchantment, and the arrangement of them, shew a more peculiar luxuriance of fancy than any other author ever compacted into such narrow bounds ; the music also, as in two former scenes, has a very just and pleasing effect.

Macbeth's mode of addressing the witches seems too much of the compulsive ; influenced by, and giving credit to such beings, we may naturally enough suppose his approach would have been in a milder strain ; however, he brings to view a number of striking images respecting their power.

A number of strange, indeed very strange apparitions, or sucking ghosts, present themselves, and deliver flattering, dubitable predictions, well calculated to mislead credulity ; and Macbeth's eagerly catching at the most favourable interpretation, shews coward conscience, like a drowning man, catching at every broken reed for support ; the long train of shades, representing the succession of  
royalty,

royalty, is well enough calculated to impress additional uneasiness upon the tyrant ; but such a superabundance and variety of spectres, palls even terror, fatigues imagination, and offends sight : a dance is very well introduced here to relieve attention.

One would naturally suppose, that Macbeth had enjoyed a full sufficiency of such agreeable company, yet we find him rather displeased that they are gone ; the intelligence of Macduff's flight to England is well thrown in to give spirit and an opening of business ; his wife and children being devoted to destruction in consequence, we might reasonably expect from what has been already shewn of Macbeth's jealous, impatient cruelty.

The next scene of Macduff's lady and son, where murderers come and demolish the latter in view of the audience, is, if I can be allowed the phrase, farcically horrid ; as disgraceful an oddity, as ever invaded Shakespeare's muse, and therefore with great justice omitted in representation.

The scene between Malcolm and Macduff is very happily conducted ; a politic suspicion makes the former reprobate himself, that he may come more perfectly at the thane of Fife's real disposition ; whose honest, patriot principles must ever warm and please attention ; those reflections he throws out on vices which shame and endanger royalty, are instructive and beautiful ; his short picture of the late king Duncan and his queen, to rouse the prince, their son to emulation, nobly pathetic ; and this proving the key to unlock Malcolm's reserve,

shews great judgment.—A doctor, brought in merely to introduce mention of English Edward's power to cure by a touch—that very dubitable circumstance of tradition—is at best trifling, or a paltry compliment to the reigning monarch; nothing at all to the matter in question, and only breaks in abruptly upon a very interesting continuation, I mean, the heart-felt intelligence that Ross brings of the fatal tragedy acted in Macduff's family; his first speaking of general griefs, the miseries of Scotland, is a well-judged preparative for a more confined and peculiar concern, relative to one of the characters present; indeed, Macduff's enquiry for Scotland, before his wife and children, shews great magnanimity of mind; and Ross's diffident manner of revealing their lamentable fall is sensibly humane; hence the scene, by degrees of most exact proportion, presents a climax of grief which never fails to work a general and suitable effect, and concludes with a pleasing, spirited denunciation of revenge against the blood-stained usurper; thus the fourth act terminates, leaving, as every fourth act in particular should do, an impatient expectation impressed upon the audience for what must follow.

Lady Macbeth's physician, and one of the ladies of her bedchamber, begin the fifth act, with a few preparatory and pertinent speeches, for a circumstance not expected; the tormenting effects of a thorny conscience galling that female fiend beyond all power of disguise or composure, a circumstance the more pleasing; as it approaches us unawares, and  
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beautifully vindicates the justice of providence, *even here upon this bank and shoal of time.*

Walking and speaking, while actually asleep, has been verified by many hundred instances, therefore her ladyship is brought to view in as justifiable and affecting a situation as could possibly have been imagined—her disjointed mode of speaking, the imaginary spot on her hand—the confused apprehensions of Macbeth's timidity, similar to what she expressed at the time the action was really committed; and the explanation thrown in by the attendants are admirably combined; we may also venture to pronounce the heavy sigh she vents, on despairing to clear herself of blood, a striking effusion of a guilty heart; her departure is finely and most naturally precipitated by acting over again the confusion which arose from knocking at the gate.

Four loyal leaders appear next, as on their way to join the lawful prince; their conversation has little material in it, save properly acquainting the audience that the tyrant coops himself in Dunsinane castle, beleagured with his crimes more painfully and closely than by his foes.

Macbeth's expressions at his entrance most plainly evince a disturbed brain and forced resolution; flying for safety to the prediction of the witches is a well-timed, additional proof of that superstitious weakness, which, stimulated by ambition, has hurried him into all his guilt and consequent misfortunes.

The expressions he uses to the servant or officer who enters with intelligence of the English army are low

and gross, far beneath even a private gentleman ; and why Shakespeare should make a monarch run into such vulgarisms is not easy to guess ; for the rage or grief of a king should always preserve peculiar dignity, without which the author cannot boast a chaste preservation of character ; the following speech, however, makes full amends for a thousand venial slips ; the breaks in the two first lines afford a beautiful variety of action, tones of voice and countenance—those which succeed are as fine declamatory reflections arising from the consciousness of guilt and general dislike, in a sensible man, as severest criticism could relish ; nor is it easy to determine which claims preference the sentiment or versification.

Take thy face hence—Seyton—I am sick at heart  
 When I behold—Seyton, I say—This push  
 Will cheer me ever or disease me now.  
 I have lived long enough ; my May of life  
 Is fallen into the fear, the yellow leaf,  
 And that which should accompany old age,  
 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
 I must not look to have ; but, in their stead,  
 Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
 Which the poor heart would fain deny, but dare not.

Macbeth's reply to the physician, on hearing of his lady's strong mental indisposition, is no less worthy of capital genius, no less satisfactory in speaking, hearing or reading :

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,  
 Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow ;  
 Raze out the written troubles of the brain ;

And,

And, with some sweet, oblivious antidote,  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous load,  
Which weighs upon the heart.

Nothing could be more happily introduced from the morals they inculcate, and the pause they give to Macbeth's rage, than the two foregoing speeches; they are a timely relief to the performer's expression, which otherwise must have been kept too much on the strain, and a delicious treat to every intelligent mind amongst an audience.

The scene which follows, so indeed every intermediate scene of this act appears, only serves to bring the catastrophe nearer to view, and to circumscribe the principal character within narrower bounds; that expectation of his fate may take wing amongst the audience—they express a firmer, tho' not so outrageous a spirit in the assailing party, and therefore appear as a natural contrast to the defensive side.

Macbeth, at his next appearance, again breaks out with flashes of false fire, vaunting the impregnable strength of his fortrefs.—Notwithstanding we have expressed, and really entertain a dislike of frequent quotation, yet so strong a temptation lies here in our way we cannot resist it; and the more readily give way, being sensible that every reader of refined conception will rather thank us, than pass any censure.—Besides, having pointed out several passages which, we apprehend, of a contrary nature—it seems a necessary point of justice to the author.—Upon hearing a scream of women, Macbeth observes,



I have almost forgot the taste of fears ;  
 The time has been, my senses would have cool'd  
 To hear a night-shriek ; and my fell of hair  
 Would, at a dismal treatise, rouse and stir  
 As life were in it—I have slept full with horrors —  
 Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
 Cannot once start me—Wherefore was that cry !

*Seyt.* The queen, my lord, is dead.

*Macb.* She should have dy'd hereafter.—  
 There would have been a time for such a word.  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow  
 Creeps in a petty pace, from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time ;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death.—Out, out, brief candle !  
 Life's but a walking shadow ! a poor player !  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more.—It is a tale,  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing !—

The foregoing speech has the first principle of intrinsic merit to an eminent degree, moral instruction ; an equal number of lines never yet exhibited a fuller, more compleat picture of the vanity of human life ; and our author has, with great address, again used the method of realizing his character, by making Macbeth speak of the player as a fictitious, transitory representative—The transition upon a messenger's entrance, who mentions Birnam-wood as moving, is truly fine ; Macbeth has rested his security upon the sandy foundation of equivocal promises, and now, the broken reeds falling away one by one, he plunges gradually into the rage and depths of desperation ; his resolution to

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fally

ally out seems rather the effect of fatal, inevitable destruction than real courage.

The business now encreases, and justly hurries on to a rapidity of material events; the tyrant is, as himself aptly expresses it, tied to a stake, and therefore through compulsion must fight; as to the combat, wherein that unfledged warrior, young Siward, falls, it seems to have very little business in the piece, unless to encrease a torrent of blood already exceeding all due bounds.

Macduff's encounter with Macbeth raises expectation to the very top of its bent; and justice sits trembling in every humane bosom for so essential a sacrifice to her as the tyrant; the introduction of Macbeth's sole remaining hope, that of being invulnerable to any person born of woman, shews great judgement, and his feelings, on being told the fallacy of his charm, are expressed in very apt terms.—Why the author chose to execute so great a culprit behind the scenes, thereby depriving the audience of a most satisfactory circumstance is not easy to imagine; death certainly is made, in this instance, too modest; and the bringing on a head defeats every trace of the author's new-born false delicacy—the present mode of representation is much better.

What follows Macbeth's fall is, like the remainder of every tragedy when the plot is revealed, and the principal characters are disposed of, a matter of very little consequence; therefore is confined, as it ought to be, within the bounds of judicious brevity; Malcolm, however, gives a piece  
of

of historic information concerning the first institution of earldoms in Scotland, which a tythe of every audience would not else know.

As *Macbeth*, in representation, dies before the audience, it appeared necessary, according to dramatic custom, to give him some conclusive lines, which Mr. GARRICK, as I have been told, has happily supplied, as nothing would be more suitable or striking, as to make him mention, with dying breath, his guilt, delusion, the witches, and those horrid visions of future punishment, which must ever appall and torture the last moments of such accumulated crimes.

It has <sup>72</sup>been already hinted, and may be laid down as an irrefragable maxim, that moral tendency is the first great and indispensable merit of any piece written for the stage; in which light I am afraid the tragedy before us, though a favourite child of genius, will not hold a very distinguished place; fate, necessity, or predestination has embarrassed the most inquisitive philosophers, the most painful theologists, and still remains matter of much perplexity to those who endeavour to develope it; SHAKESPEARE therefore, who was no doubt, an able moralist, should have declined any subject which glanced an eye that way, yet we find his *Macbeth* strongly inculcates power of prediction, even in the worst and most contemptible agents; inculcates a supernatural influence of one mortal being over another: It is but a very weak defence to say he only wrote according to the accepted notions of those times from whence he drew his plot.—admitted—  
but

but whatever tends to weaken reason, to mislead the understanding, and intimidate the heart, should not be used as a subject for dramatic composition, which adorns fiction with her most persuasive charms; weak minds are ever more liable to receive prejudicial, than advantageous impressions; wherefore, any character, incidents, or sentiments, which may work the former effect, should be industriously avoided; if the stage, upon some occasions does not improve, it should at least leave an audience no worse than it finds them, equally avoiding vice and credulity.

That I do not charge our author with promulging principles of fatalism without reason, let me produce two passages, exclusive of the prophecies, which are derived from that source—at the end of Lady Macbeth's first soliloquy, she says

All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which *fate* and *metaphysical* aid doth seem  
To have crowned thee with.

Macbeth also, just before the murderers are introduced to him in the third act, expresses himself thus

To make them kings! the seed of Banquo kings!  
Rather than so, come *fate* into the list,  
And champion me to the utterance.—

The very word *fate*, if it has any meaning at all, can boast but an unfavourable one to moral fitness; it is a term crept into common use, and established by custom; how frequently do we hear, upon the accidental or violent death of any person, this absurd remark made—it was his or her *fate*—a minute investigation of this point would run me into an unpardonable digression from my proposed sub-

ject, wherefore I have only started some hints for abler critics to elucidate or set aside, as may seem fit; and shall only add, that the plot of Macbeth, though the unities of time and place are much infringed upon, does not strike in representation with any offensive ideas of improbability; but rises by very just degrees to a catastrophe, which is well wrought up; the moral is the same as that of Richard the Third, shewing that a guilty conscience is a constant tormentor, and that a royal, as well as a private murderer is obnoxious to punishment.

Among the natural characters, if Macbeth and his lady deserve such an epithet, there is very little variety or contrast; all the men, except the principal, are tolerably honest; as to the heroine, she stands alone.

To delineate Macbeth is not easy; the author seems like Prometheus, to have made a man of his own, but to have stolen his animation rather from Hell than Heaven: by the account we hear of him, previous to his entrance, magnanimity and courage appear conspicuous in his conduct; yet, no sooner does he present himself, but with all the weakness of unpractised youth, he receives a strong impression from old women's prognostications; and with all the aptness of a studied villain suggests the most pernicious practices, which from that moment, with a very few slight intervals, take entire possession of his heart; from his future proceedings, we perceive him more actuated by jealous apprehensions than sound policy; more influenced by rage and desperation, than any degree of natural resolution; credulous

dulous, impatient, vindictive, ambitious without a spark of honour ; cruel without a gleam of pity—in short, as compleat a tool for ministers of temptation to work upon, as ever fancy formed, and too disgraceful for nature to admit amongst her works.

However considered in the view of theatrical action, there is not one personage to be found in our English drama, which more strongly impresses an audience, which requires more judgment and greater powers to do it justice ; many passages are intricate, some heavy, but for the greater part, powerfully impassioned ; the mental agitation he is thrown into, requires expression peculiarly forcible, of action, look and utterance, even so far as to make the hearts of spectators shrink, and to thrill their blood ; indeed, every assistance from externals is given the actor, such as daggers, bloody hands, ghosts, &c. but these must be treated judiciously, or the effect, as I have sometimes seen it, may take a ludicrous turn.

Through all the soliloquies of anxious reflections in the first act ; amidst the pangs of guilty apprehensions and pungent remorse in the second ; through all the distracted terror of the third ; all the impetuous curiosity of the fourth, and all the desperation of the fifth, Mr. GARRICK shews uniform, unabating excellence ; scarce a look, motion, or tone, but takes possession of our faculties: and leads them to a just sensibility.

As SHAKESPEARE rises above himself in many places, so does this his greatest and best commentator, who not only presents his beautie to the imagina-

tion, but brings them home feelingly to the heart : among a thousand other instances of almost necromantic merit; let us turn our recollection only to a few in the character of Macbeth ; who ever saw the *immortal actor* start at, and trace the imaginary dagger previous to Duncan's murder, without embodying by sympathy, unsubstantial air into the alarming shape of such a weapon ? Whoever heard the low, but piercing notes of his voice when the *deed is done*, repeating those inimitable passages which mention the sleeping grooms and murder of sleep, without feeling a vibration of the nerves ? Who ever saw the guilty distraction of features he assumes on Banquo's appearance at the feast, without sacrificing reason to real apprehension from a mimic ghost ; who has heard his speech, after receiving his death wound, uttered with the utmost agony of body and mind, but trembles at the idea of future punishment, and almost pities the expiring wretch, though stained with crimes of the deepest die ?

Theatrical performance to most spectators appears a mechanical disposition of limbs, and a parroted mode of speech ; so indeed it really is too often, but intrinsic merit soars far beyond such narrow, barren limits, she traces nature through her various windings, dives into her deepest recesses, and snatches ten thousand beauties which plodding method can never display ; the dullest comprehension may be taught to enter on this side or that ; to stand on a particular board ; to raise the voice here, and

and fall it there ; but unless motion and utterance are regulated by a cultivated knowledge of life, and self born intelligent feelings, no greater degree of excellence can be attained than unaffecting propriety ; like a fair field whose native fertility of soil produces a beauteous luxuriant crop of spontaneous vegetation, which art can only regulate, not enrich ; Mr. GARRICK's matchless genius not only captivates our sportive senses, but also furnishes high relished substantial food for our minds to strengthen by.

Mr. QUIN, whose sole merit in tragedy was declamation or brutal pride, was undescribably cumbersome in Macbeth ; his face, which had no possible variation from its natural grace, except sternness and festivity, could not be expected to exhibit the acute sensations of this character ; his figure was void of the essential spirit, and his voice far too monotonous for the transitions which so frequently occur ; yet, wonderful to be told, he played it several years with considerable applause.

Mr. SHERIDAN shewed more variety of acting in this part than any other, and made an astonishing good use of his limited powers ; without any exaggeration of compliment to that gentleman, we must place him in a very reputable degree of competition with Mr. GARRICK in the dagger scene, and at the same time confess a doubt, whether any performer ever spoke the words, "*this is a sorry fight,*" better—as to the third, fourth, and fifth acts, his meaning well, was all we could ever perceive to recommend him.

Mr.



Mr. BARRY as a capital actor—indeed a very capital one in his proper cast, made, in our comprehension, but a lukewarm affair of Macbeth, his amorous harmony of features and voice, could but faintly, if at all, describe passions incident to a tyrant, in such circumstances as he is placed; his commanding figure, and other requisites preserved him from being insipid, though far beneath himself.

Mr. POWELL—light lie the ashes of the respectable dead—was beyond doubt, partially received in this tragedy; the requisite force of expression and a proper disposition of features were wanting; after the murder, his feelings dwindled into a kind of boyish whimpering, and his countenance rather described bodily than mental pain; in the third act, he seemed unequal to the arduous task of describing extreme horror, and in the fifth, Macbeth's weight of desparation bore him down; even the soliloquies appeared too sententiously heavy for his expression; as his playing the part was certainly matter of choice; I am sorry he ever mistook his own abilities so much, notwithstanding he met public indulgence, a compliment, in some measure, due even to the failings of a performer, who displayed so much intrinsic merit as he did on more suitable occasions.

Mr. HOLLAND, that industrious, useful, laborious, imitative actor, idolized his great instructor too much to be any thing original; in Macbeth we deem him particularly unhappy; aiming to be great, he frequently lost all trace of character: untunably

tunably stiff in all his declamation ; mechanical in action ; ungracious in attitude ; affected in feeling ; unharmonious in tones ; irregular in emphasis ; and wild in passion ; yet having an agreeable person, significant aspect, and powerful voice, he often pleased his audience, and kept attention awake, while judgment was obliged to slumber, or seek safety in silence from popular prejudice.

Among many theatrical circumstances much to be lamented, is that terrible necessity which forces Mr. SMITH into an undertaking so opposite to every one of his requisites, except figure ; we are confident his good sense agrees with us, that saddling him with the part is an imposition upon that good nature and integrity which stimulate him to work through thick and thin, for the support of Covent Garden house.

Macduff is a part of no great action, except on discovery of the King's murder, and the fourth act scene ; Messrs. RYAN and HAVARD both did him great justice, yet we must be of opinion that Mr. REDDISH depicts him with superior strength and beauty ; his feelings are manly, yet tender ; spirited without excess ; and to us convey whatever an author intended, or an audience can wish.

Banquo's chief merit is as a ghost ; here Mr. ROSS made the most striking, picturesque appearance we have ever seen, and with peculiar grace even beautified horror : All the rest of the men in this play are unworthy notice.

Lady Macbeth, as to the detestable composition of her character, has been sufficiently animadverted on

on, therefore little more is necessary than to observe, that though there does not appear much call for capital merit, yet several first-rate actresses have made but a languid figure in representing her.

Notwithstanding Mrs. WOFFINGTON was extremely well received, and really did the part as well as her deplorable tragedy voice would admit; we must place Mrs. PRITCHARD foremost; who made a very just distinction, in the scene where Banquo's ghost appears; between reproving Macbeth's behaviour with passion, or the anxiety of apprehension, lest he should betray his guilt; this latter method she happily pursued, and here, as well as in the sleeping scene, gained manifest superiority. Mrs. YATES, at present, comes nearest the point of praise, but certainly displays no very conspicuous merit in the character; and to mention Mrs. BARRY would be to injure her, as it certainly does not at all coincide with her capabilities.

The witches I should take no notice of, but for a supposed amendment in speaking and dressing those characters at Covent Garden; as beings out of the course of nature, SHAKESPEARE furnished them with a peculiarity of style, why then should we not suppose he meant a peculiarity of deportment and utterance? He certainly did, as much as for Caliban; a languid propriety of natural expression destroys in them, pleasing and characteristic oddity—as to dressing them in the Sybillic taste, it makes them rather Roman than Scots witches, and sacrifices established national ideas, at the shrine of false decorum, for—  
did

did appearance, ugly features, and advanced age, dubbed any female a witch in the times of credulity; even now, a very disagreeable woman, bent with age, and wrapped in filthiness, is stigmatized with that title, though not so seriously, north of the Tweed; nay, Macbeth himself stiles them *fit by* hags, most certainly alluding to personal appearance.—If an alteration of dress is to take place in this play, I could wish the characters were dressed in habits of the times, which would be pleasing, and we apprehend necessary.

Macbeth, for its boldness of sentiment, strength of versification, variety of passions and preternatural beings, deserves to be esteemed a first rate tragedy, containing a number of beauties never exceeded, and many blemishes very censurable; dangerous in representation, as has been said, to weak minds; unintelligible to moderate conceptions in many places, upon perusal; therefore, chiefly calculated for sound understanding, and established resolution of principles, either on the stage or in the study.

## THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

Written by GAY.

**N**otwithstanding we confess a partiality for music when it is composed of sweet, significant and persuasive sounds, yet the Opera, serious or comic, but especially the former, is a species of the drama not at all defensible; it carries absurdity in its front, and absolutely puts nature out of countenance; to prove this would be superfluous, as we cannot pay any reader so bad compliment as to suppose that a single hint does not bear satisfactory conviction.

Shocked as every man of real taste, feeling and genius must be, at the predominance of those dear-bought, unessential exotics, Italian operas, Gay had a mind to exercise his unbounded talent of satire against them; and that good sense, a little embittered, might go down with a more fashionable gout, as apothecaries gild pills, he called in music to his aid, and such music too as was relishable by, not caviare to the million; thus, as I have read of some army, who defeated their enemies by shooting back upon them their own arrows, so he struck deep wounds into the emaciated *signori* of that time, by shewing such sterling wit and humour as they were unacquainted with, decorated with the reigning taste of the day—the thought was happy, the execution equal to the design, and the success suitable to both.

In

*Beggar's Opera.*

In the very name of this piece, the author seems to have issued a keen shaft of ridicule, and making the author a beggar is a noble sarcasm on fortune and public taste, which have suffered most excellent talents to pine under a thousand disadvantages, of unmerited penury and even contempt: no one knew better than Gay the neglect which too commonly attends literary merit; he knew, felt, and with great poignancy of expression declared it.

This piece opens with Jonathan Wild, the reigning thief-maker and thief-taker of that time, under the title of Peachum, perusing his tyburn-register; his song, in eight lines, contains more of the spirit of truth and satire than would animate some poems of eight score; the succeeding scene with Filch exhibits many excellent remarks, and his account of the gang when looking out for proper sacrifices, is not only an admirable, but a very useful picture to the profligate; Mrs. Peachum's expressions of pleasure, that there has been no murder committed for some time recommend her to favour; and Peachum's reply, shewing what money will do in criminal prosecutions, is, I am afraid, too just; mention of Macheath naturally falls in, and we are prepared to receive him, at least, as an agreeable highwayman: his attachment to Polly comes aptly into the conversation, and the plot very properly begins to dawn.—Speaking of Polly's being in love, Peachum discovers a very suitable selfishness, and where he remarks of what service she may be to him, by acting on political principles, the expression, as well as some preceding ones, glows with

satiric meaning—"My daughter to me should be,  
 "like a court-lady to a minister of state, a key to  
 "the whole gang."

Mrs. Peachum's scene with Filch has nothing but some strokes of low humour to recommend it, yet in that light is very satisfactory, and always works a very laughable effect.

Polly is introduced by her father under such circumstances as engage favour; her mother's violent entrance is much in character; the fainting too, and the remedy for it, are powerful burlesque on similar incidents to be met in graver pieces; the daughter's silence on her marriage being discovered, is a very probable effect of confusion and apprehension, nor does a word of the consequent dialogue fail of due influence; the impatience of the parents, one through pride, the other through interest, give a fine opening for Polly's delicate, interesting apology of a sincere passion for the man she has married; and Peachum's design of taking off his new son-in-law, seems the growth of a mind fortified against any feelings of humanity.

It is matter of wonder how several of our gay ladies and fine gentlemen can hear the following speech without blushing conscious guilt; "If she  
 "had had only an intrigue with the fellow, why  
 "the very best families have excused and huddled  
 "up an affair of that sort; 'tis marriage, husband, that makes it a blemish." What Peachum replies has a luxuriance of merit, "But money, wife, is the true fuller's earth for reputations; there is not a spot or stain but what it can  
 "take

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"take out;" what brilliant, what general, what compacted satire! mounted on the unshakable basis of truth does this short sentence contain? How essentially superior to an assimilation of the same ingredients and Mr. Foote's pleasantry, in the prelude to Mr. Colman's *Man and Wife*, which difference is only mentioned here to shew how much the happy thought of one man of genius may be enervated by passing through the imagination of another.

The parents endeavouring to persuade their daughter that an impeachment of the man she loves, and is her husband also, must recommend her to their favour, has something in it shocking, yet affords a very engaging, pathetic transition in Polly's character; and her soliloquy upon hearing unseen the plan for Macheath's destruction, deserves much better delivery, much more expressive features than it is in general favoured with—the breaks are fine, the sentiments tender, the description lively, all dressed in a naiveté of language, which finds a passage to the heart, by nature's aid alone.

The hero is brought forward with great advantage, the bold spirited symphony which introduces him has a similar effect to those flourishes of martial music in some tragedies, and he comes very opportunely to give the first act additional life towards its conclusion; Polly's distress for his present danger, very naturally disappears at the sight and affectionate address of her husband, but with equal propriety soon returns again, with a variation which pleasingly touches the audience; his reluctance to fly, and his tender resolution to part for



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a time rather than hazard his safety, raises delicate feelings.

As only the first song has been particularized, it may be necessary to observe, that to avoid repetition as much as possible, all the musical part will be taken notice of in our general view of the piece, on closing the remarks.

In the first scene of the second act we are presented with a set of characters not at all respectable by profession, yet amusing, and somewhat instructive from their conversation, which however we deem too full of sound sense, and genteel, keen satire for such personages—besides there are some sophistical justifications of highwaymen, rather dangerous for dissolute minds; in the drama this should be rarely meddled with, as natural vice gains more confirmation from delusive shew and false arguments, than natural virtue does from moral instruction—however placing even thieves above courtiers in friendly attachments, as the author has judiciously done in what follows, must considerably palliate the objection we have raised: one says, “Who is there here who would not die for his friend?” another replies, “who is there here who would betray him for interest?” To which a third returns, “Shew me a gang of courtiers who can say as much”. ’Tis very plain from this, and many other inimitable passages, that our author knew courtiers in general exceeding well, whatever his knowledge of thieves might be.

Macheath’s short interview with his gang means nothing more than acquainting them with the reason  
son

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son of his disappearance for some time ; by Mal o'the Mint's mentioning Moorfields as the place of their rendezvous, we may learn, that part of the town was then as reputable as some spots of it are at present.—What succeeds this scene, previous to the introduction of the ladies, and their conversation, however natural, are by no means proper for public representation ; the dialogue has great spirit, and is enlivened by several smart repartees, but the subject of action, and the characters are so much founded upon licentiousness, as not to be defensible ; improper prejudicial ideas must arise, and we heartily condemn the whole from this principle, that vice is never more dangerous than when she smiles, covering her deformities with a veil of pleasantry.

Indeed, apprehending Macheath in the midst of his jollity, by the treachery of two prostitutes, may convey good warning to some who associate with such wretches ; yet we are apt to think this scene is more apt to enflame the passions than to correct the conduct of youth ; and delicate taste must be offended at many sentiments too gross for its tender relish.

Lockit's reception of Macheath, and his remarks upon the fetters at different prices, shew the gaoler in true, humourous, yet shocking colours ; it being a miserable perversion of justice to treat culprits not according to the enormity of their crimes, but strength of their pockets—the perplexity of Macheath arising from his apprehension of Lucy's reproaches, falls well in, and her timely appearance confirms his fear ; however, we must again pass censure upon our author for making Lu-  
cy

By speak of her load of infamy; from <sup>*Beggar's Opera.*</sup> a promise of marriage and her jealousy of Polly Peachum, the plot might have been sufficiently wrought up without allusions so very sensual, I mean with respect to the audience; Macheath's endeavouring to soothe her into a good humour that may serve his particular purpose, though ungenerous, is polite and in character; the words which Lucy speaks at going off, "I long to be made an honest woman," are a strong and pleasant stroke of ridicule against those who vainly imagine that virtue is comprized in any external ceremony, and that a mere compliance with established custom can sanctify vice.

The satire which occurs between Peachum and Lockit concerning their accounts, are masterly; and the song, which I cannot avoid quoting, inimitable;

When you censure the age,

Be cautious and sage,

Left the courtiers offended should be;

If you mention vice or bribe,

'Tis so pat to all the tribe,

That each cries that was level'd at me.

I have heard a short anecdote of Sir Robert Walpole, against whom Gay chiefly brandished his pen, in respect of this song, which shewed an agreeable and politic presence of mind; being in the stage-box, at the first representation of the opera, a most universal encore attended Lockit's song, and all eyes at the same time were fixed on Sir Robert, who, noting the matter, joined heartily in the plaudit, and encored it a second time with his  
single

*Myer's Opera.*

single voice; which not only blunted the poetical shaft, but gained a general huzza from the audience.

The thief-taker and gaoler quarrelling upon a principle of honour, is also admirably farcastical upon those known scoundrels who pretend a jealousy for reputation, and who insolently quarrel upon principles they are totally unacquainted with—nothing is commoner than for prostitutes to commence vehement burlesque altercations about virtue, and gamblers about honesty.

Lucy's interposition with her father in favour of her gallant, and his obdurate refusal, manifest a strict knowledge of nature, as does her determination to effect the captain's freedom at any rate; no incident ever fell in more opportunely than Polly's entrance at this critical point of time; it reduces Macheath to a peculiar dilemma, and contrasts the ladies very agreeably; their different feelings are expressed with a degree of very nice distinction; tenderness is well opposed, by vehemence of affection, and the whole scene furnishes extreme agreeable action.—Polly's patience so long under such circumstances, and at last breaking out into womanish resentment, is a good delineation of a female mind, under some restraint of delicacy, yet susceptible of provocation upon tender points; the quarrel is well conceived, judiciously conducted, and wrought into a humourous climax; the timely intervention of Peachum prevents actual hostilities, and causes a pleasing touch of the pathetic; while Lucy's resolution of stealing her father's keys to give

Macheath his liberty, puts expectation into a fresh degree of suspense, and concludes the second act at a critical period.

A supposition of his daughter's connivance at the captain's escape, gives rise to Lockit's treating her somewhat roughly at the beginning of the third act; but, in the true spirit of corruption, which we may stile *ex officio*, indeed the effect of his nature as well as place, he enquires for the perquisite, and is not a little chagrined at finding the girl possessed of generosity.—In the short subsequent scene, where Filch is introduced, we can by no means approve his gross answer to Lockit's observation, that he looks like a shotten herring; it is certainly only fit for the meridian of St. Giles's.

The character of a highwayman is well preserved in Macheath's making a gaming-house his first asylum after enlargement, and fitting him up with occasional finery of external appearance, shews the author not only a judge of nature, but the stage; for such sort of collectors general aim at making a gallant figure, to appear what they are not; and change of dress often gives an actor some novelty with the audience; this scene, however, imports little more than to shew the dissipated turn of our hero.

Peachum, Lockit, and the tally-woman, Mrs. Dye Trapes, furnish us with a dish of conversation censurable throughout, though it always pleases by the force of action; the subject is too mean for the public ear, the characters mentioned too despicable for notice, except from the police, and the old lady's

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lady's secrets of her abominable trade infamous ; I would therefore recommend some other means of discovering Macheath, and heartily wish a total omission of such stuff as no person can learn any thing from, which it would not be better to be ignorant of.

The design of poisoning Polly in a glass of strong waters, renders Lucy a right Newgate bird, and makes her, though the fact is not perpetrated, an object of detestation ; and we apprehend unnecessarily, unless we carry the idea of burlesque constantly in view, and consider the author as ridiculing the poisoned bowls of tragedy, so often needlessly administered, and so often miraculously escaped ; another Billingsgate sentiment we find furnished to Lucy in this scene, it comes immediately after these words, " I vow, Polly, I shall " take it monstrously ill, if you refuse me."

Macheath's appearing in custody surprizes and alarms attention ; his interview with the real and wou'd-be wife is very expressive of the circumstance, and good performance may call forth some drops of pity for a very unworthy object.—The different applications of the females to their several fathers call up tender sensations, but, I apprehend, they are rather misplaced ; for as Polly is certainly the leading character, and offers the most pathetic address, hers should have come last by way of climax.

The sensible resolution, and commendable though divided tenderness of Macheath, in his song as he goes off to the Old-bailey, recommend him consi-

decrably to favour, and are therefore artfully thrown in. *Beggar's Opera.*

As Italian operas depend a good deal on dancing merit, we find Gay has a stroke even at that, by introducing a hop among the Newgate gentry, to which, by way of making a strange, yet satirical medley, the condemned hole immediately succeeds; and, like other great men in some serious pieces, the captain sings through all weathers—high spirits, low spirits, love and despair; he has no less than ten airs to go through successively, yet so judiciously varied that he must be a bitter bad vocal performer indeed, who palls his audience with them; the following short scenes between him and his friends, and that with the ladies, claim no great share of praise, nor do they merit any censure.

That very unexpected turn the catastrophe takes is thus apologized for by the Beggar, “In this kind of drama, ’tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about—so you rabble there, run and cry a reprieve.”—Thus, by a kind of poetical, or rather operatical legerdemain, hey! pass! misery is gone, and leaves joy and cheerfulness in its place.

To examine the plot of this piece by strict rules of criticism, as the author does not by any means pretend to regularity, would be too severe; yet the unities are not grossly intruded upon, except in one place—there are but three short speeches and a dance between Macheath’s being taken to trial and his appearing in the condemned hole, which could scarce happen till a day after at least,

as

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as prisoners, though found guilty, are not put there till after sentence.

The dialogue of this opera has great ease, spirit and correctness; the sentiments are always just, though sometimes blameable; the satire inimitable, and the songs without one exception, bating that of Mrs. Trapes, an unparalleled treasure of brilliant allusions, instructive ideas, shrewd tendency, familiar expression, and unaffected versification: they have the plain outward semblance of common ballads, yet teem with a luxuriance of imagination, truth and policy, most amazingly compacted into an incredible narrow compass, which, in my estimation, entitles them to be stiled the quintessence of merit.

Yet after offering this impartial tribute at the shrine of Gay's genius, it gives us concern to be under a necessity of remarking, that a moral was the last point in his view, if it entered there at all; and, in this respect, a gloomy cloud casts its dark shade over the shine of praise he must otherwise have commanded; if young minds, which indeed the music helps, leave a theatre untainted with any prejudicial impression after seeing the BEGGAR'S OPERA; if no foolish young person of either sex admires Macheath as any other than a diverting stage-character; if his shew and false courage do not delude the one sex, nor his gallantry attract the other, then the piece may stand as inoffensive; but I fear it does not often work an effect of such mediocrity, therefore am bold to call it a composition made



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made up of ingredients much more noxious than salutary, so pleasingly relished, so flatteringly gilded, that scarce any eye or taste can resist the powerful, dangerous temptation ; it stands, like light and heat, alluring passions, which play like moths around it, till they fall a prey to the delusive object of their delight.

In respect of characters, the men are all errant scoundrels, and the females, except Polly, vicious jades ; necessarily there can be but a very faint degree of light and shade, which undoubtedly constitute not only a great part of dramatic beauty but propriety ; for all angels, or all devils, is but a very partial, uninstruative picture of human nature ; but indeed our author's choice of characters would not admit of much variety, wherefore we heartily lament his prostituting such exquisite talents to so unedifying, or rather immoral a subject.

Macheath has something specious, but not one valuable symptom in his composition ; his profession is not only to rob men of their property, but females of their characters and peace ; there is an appearance of courage, without a spark of reality ; for at the trying moment, we find he applies to the true resource of a coward, liquor ; in short, he is a contemptible knave, yet an agreeable gallant, and therefore, as we have already observed, the more dangerous and censurable for public exhibition.

In the performance of this part, spirited boldness of figure, flashy gentility of deportment, and an expressive, not a refined taste of singing, are  
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necessary ; under this idea of requisites, we cannot say that any performer within our knowledge has represented him in a capital manner ; Mr. BEARD's appearance and manner of singing were all that could be wished, but his speaking was intolerable, and he appeared too much of the gentleman ; Mr. LOWE's voice was more happy, but his expression less characteristic, and his speaking, if possible, worse ; Mr. VERNON's Musical knowledge is extensive, his merit in acting great, but his figure rather inadequate, and his voice totally so ; Mr. MATTOCKS is far too faint in appearance and every degree of expression.

If the managers of Drury-lane would do themselves and the public justice, Mr. BANNISTER, who looks, walks and sings the part, take all together, —better than any who have been mentioned, should undoubtedly be put in possession of it ; and indeed of many others, which are miserably mutilated by the present possessors.—Mr. DIGGES, whom we mentioned in our remarks upon Richard the Third, was not without great merit in the captain.

Peachum and Lockit are admirably drawn for their stations, and with a very natural distinction ; the former being more in the world, has more extended ideas, more shrewdness, and is a knave of greater latitude ; Mr. MACKLIN and Mr. YATES were indisputably superior to any competitors in in this part ; but for general dryness and a just cynical turn of humour, Mr. MACKLIN stood, in  
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*Beggar's Opera.*  
our opinion, foremost; at present it does not deserve notice at either house.

Lockit is obvious and easy to hit, yet all we have seen never exceeded mediocrity; some sink him into an absolute black-guard, which there is no reason for; and others soften the natural gloom of his station too much; the late Mr. BERRY was we apprehend, the most tolerable of any person for several years.—Filch is well described by the author, and never was, nor never need be better expressed than by Mr. PARSONS of Drury-lane, who, if it would not seem an awkward compliment, looks, deports, and sings the pickpocket to perfection.

Polly is an agreeable young woman, imprudent, yet delicate, and constant in affection; she commits a breach of filial duty, 'tis true, in point of her secret marriage, but such parents as hers appear to deserve little confidence; no character in the drama has furnished so many young adventurers as this, several of whom have made ample provision for themselves through her introduction into life, and, upon the whole, there never was a part in which so many unequal performers made a tolerable stand; out of a large number in our recollection, the following ladies deserved considerable praise, Miss NORRIS, Miss FALKNER, and Mrs. CHAMBERS.

Mrs. PINTO sung it better, and brought more money by far than any person since the first season of exhibition; Mrs. ARNE also had great musical merit,

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ment, but neither of them possessed a shadow of acting. Mrs. CYBER was to the eye, heart, and ear, worth all we have mentioned, and the only sensible speaking female singer that we remember—were the understanding to be pleased with sensibility of countenance, emphasis, and sound, we could wish to see Miss MACKLIN do the part at present.

Lucy is a character, who, through weakness or vice, has forfeited her virtue; she is composed of violent passions, and, as we have shewn, of a bad heart; yet, even with moderate merit, must please in acting; Mrs. CLIVE, though she squalled the songs did the part more justice than any body else. We presume Mrs. MATTOCKS would shew more character and spirit in it than any one now on the stage.

Mrs. Peachum was extremely well represented by Mrs. MACKLIN, and does not suffer injury from Mrs. VINCENT; but, we apprehend, would be much better in possession of Mrs. GREEN; as to Mrs. Dye, and the other ladies, we shall take no notice of them, as we cordially wish they were never to be seen again.

From observations already made, we have shewn that there is scarce any moral deducible from the BEGGAR'S OPERA; that it is, upon the whole, a loathsome, infectious carcase, cloathed in an angelic garb; that it is founded upon solid sense and satiric truth, yet rises into a superstructure of licentiousness; that it is highly entertaining, not at all instructive; that it is an exquisite burlesque upon Italian operas, and not a little so upon virtue; that it is inflammatory

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with humour, and vulgar with elegance; in short, it is one of those bewitching evils, which offended reason must wish had never been brought to light, while delighted taste must lament the very idea of its annihilation.



OTHELLO.

O T H E L L O,

Written by SHAKESPEARE.

**I**T is very much to be wished that tragic writers would rather bend their thoughts to familiar circumstances in life, than those which concern elevated feelings and abstract passions ; the latter may indeed furnish matter to genius of a dignified nature, but the former most effectually appeal to general instruction ; thus we may safely assert, that though our author's Julius Cæsar is equal to any piece, ancient or modern, for importance of subject, greatness of character, and liberality of sentiment, yet feebler efforts of genius carry in their nature and composition a greater degree of social utility ; not that we consider the noble spirit of patriotism, as too great or copious for any British bosom, at least any honest one ; but it is not so relative to common domestic concerns, as many other feelings which work essential advantage, or overbearing misery.

Thus much we premise in favour of this tragedy founded on that fever of the mind, jealousy, which Doctor Young most emphatically calls “the Hydra of calamities ;” a passion often arising in every station of life from sparks of inflammation, at first scarce perceptible, into “a conflagration of the soul.”

OTHELLO commences with a scene between Roderigo and Iago, designed to let the audience know that the latter is chagrined at his general, the Moor,

for not promoting him according to his desire, and that the former has a very affectionate tendre for the commander's new married lady; it appears plain that the amorous simpleton is made an absolute tool to the deep designs of Iago, who, not caring to appear himself as the Moor's enemy, sets on the glib-tongued coxcomb to alarm Brabantio with the elopement of his daughter; this scene is well written, but the passages hereafter pointed at, are egregiously offensive, and if performers will not voluntarily omit them, ought to be condemned into obscurity, at least from the stage, by public repulses.—Iago's second speech to Brabantio under the window, beginning, "Sir, you are robb'd," is most grossly conceived; and what immediately succeeds these words of the same character, if possible, worse, "because we come to do you service, you think us ruffians" Iago's departure and leaving Rodorigo to be the old Senator's guide is very politic.

Upon appearing, with Othello we find the double-dealing Ancient, working into Othello's confidence by specious professions of attachment to his inclination and interest; which prepares us for his future insidious transactions; while the Moor's contempt of Brabantio's resentment, shows that true dignified security of mind, which conscious innocence bestows—the following scenes till he appears before the senate are rather trifling, save that a message from the state saves Othello the disgrace of going as a prisoner.

The senate scene has ever been deemed an important one, and indeed with considerable justice; the

*Othello.*

the paternal feelings of Brabantio and the generous confidence of Othello are well supported; but the charge of gaining Desdemona by spells and medicines, however consonant to a Venetian law, against such practices, I could wish had been rejected by our author, for the same reason I urged against witches; the great probability of such characters, and chimerical notions impressing irrational ideas upon weak minds; indeed Brabantio's reason for supposing that his daughter could not have been won by any fair means to a match so seemingly preposterous, is strong, but not a sufficient apology for his charge, which shows him like some modern senators to be none of the wisest—King James wrote a book of Demonology but can any man in his senses call it a rational, though a royal production.

In his first address to the senate, we perceive the Moor apologizing with all the smoothness and flow of eloquence for his deficiency in that respect, he is nervous concise and figurative, therefore his modest opinion of himself seem strong symptoms of affectation, we find Brabantio in his reply possessed with the true old womanish, credulous obstinacy; sticking close to conjuration, which indeed the duke very properly reproves.

Othello's narration, though literally fine, subjects him to an imputation of self sufficiency; that he might relate his story for the entertainment of Desdemona, and that she might conceive an affection for one concerned in so many great and interesting events, is very consistent with him as a polite warrior, and with her as an admirer of military at-



achievements rising almost into the strain of romance; but for the moor to aim so much at recapitulation of what must be known to most, if not all of the statesmen who employed him as a general, shews as if Shakespeare unbridled fancy, and studied more giving the performer a fine speech, than preserving delicacy of character, yet whatever objection we raise is much, if not entirely softened, by the great pleasure it always gives in recital.

Desdemona's appearance and candid declaration in favour of the moor, gives a very satisfactory refutation to her father's mysterious allegations; what follows concerning Cyprus, we can by no means see any necessity for; as every part of the plot might have been preserved with equal force, by keeping the characters all through at Venice; we have declared ourselves so unclassical as not to be the friends of strict limitation, but cannot countenance the introduction of a sea-voyage, where there is no occasion for it; Othello might have appeared as much in his military capacity, by receiving orders to make dispositions at home against a Turkish invasion, as by going abroad.

The ensuing scene between Iago and Rodorigo shews the former in a more extended light of knavery, and his manner of working upon the shallow fopling is happily executed; however, we can by no means approve such a character as Rodorigo in tragical composition; he is only to be laughed at, and that cannot be deemed a proper feeling for serious pieces; besides through the whole he is literally a non-essential, and as he says himself, "that he is not a hound that hunts, but one that

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“fills up the cry;”—would he were stationed more suitably, not only because he disgraces more important concerns by his levity, but also because his conferences with Iago are upon an offensive subject, and furnish many nauseous ideas, set forth in gross expression.

Iago's soliloquy, which concludes the first act, is a master-piece of villainous machination, finely written for a judicious actor, and very artfully throws out his chief motive of resentment against the general; but if his expression of jealousy had been more obliquely worded, it would have been more commendable.

It is very judicious to retrench considerably those trifling scenes at the beginning of the second act; but why the following speeches of Montano and a gentleman should be omitted I know not, since a storm is mentioned, nothing could be put in their mouths as spectators of distracted elements, more natural or more consistently poetical than these lines;

*Mon.* Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land:

A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements;

If it hath ruffian'd so upon the sea,

What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,

Can hold the mortise?—What shall we hear of this?

*Gen.* A segregation of the Turkish fleet;

For do but stand upon the foaming shore,

The chiding billows seem to pelt the clouds;

The wind-shak'd surge, with high and monstrous main,

Seems to cast water on the burning bear,

And quench the guards o' th' ever-fixed pole.

I never did like molestation view

On th' enchain'd flood.

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Had the preceding passages belonged to capital characters, they would have been carefully retained; but in theatrical paring it seems a rule, to render the smaller parts as inconsiderable as possible, from a paltry, selfish notion that thereby they become a better foil to the principal ones; this makes prompters books such miserable, mutilated objects, as they are in many places; and at the same time wrongs both the author and public taste; besides the preceding speeches are absolutely essential to raise a preparative anxiety for the safety of Othello, Iago's treatment of Emilia, and his reflections on wives in general, not only before strangers, but even before Desdemona, is brutally unpolite; a miserable shift to give time for Othello's arrival; besides the line after this, "Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk;" admits no justification; yet is retained in speaking by the same wise authorities which exclude the above quotation, so pregnant with beautiful propriety.—The last line of a former speech is also fulsome; it comes after this, "Saints in your injuries—devils being offended;" and all the ancient's poetical reflections have a most plentiful lack of desirable meaning; they do indeed verify his own remark of *coming forth brains* and all; to be plain, the whole of this scene, till Iago's remarks on Desdemona's freedom with Cassio, is either trifling or abominable; what depravity of imagination could tempt Shakespeare to introduce the words in Iago's side-speech after these, "Your fingers to your lips," it is impossible to conceive; for they are not only indecent, but otherwise improper, as they imply an uneasiness at the

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*Othello.*

favour shewn Cassio, which should rather please him, as it apparently works for his purpose.

Othello's entrance relieves and charms attention after so insipid an interval; the rapture of meeting safe, after mutual danger, is expressed equal to every idea arising from affection of heart and fire of imagination, and the interview gives more satisfaction to sensibility by being made judiciously short.

Licentiousness of sentiment again prevails unpar-  
donably between Iago and Roderigo, even so much  
as to shame quotation; indeed to do the stage jus-  
tice, this scene is much and commendably curtailed  
in representation; Iago's policy and method of  
working up Roderigo to quarrel with Cassio,  
speak an able genius for mischief; his subsequent  
soliloquy offers some palliation of his baseness, by  
harping again upon the string of jealousy, and opens  
his future views more at large; upon his going off  
the author has introduced a herald to proclaim fes-  
tivity; and we presume not improperly, however  
the theatres reject him.

Bringing Othello and Desdemona for no other  
reason than to give Cassio charge of the court-watch,  
which a general never does in such a manner to his  
inferior officer, is trifling with the Moor's impor-  
tance, and makes his return during the quarrel, too  
improbably sudden; Iago's inflammatory speeches  
to Cassio respecting Desdemona, and the consum-  
mation of the Moor's nuptials, are far too luscious  
for essential public reserve, or even delicate privacy

—the manner of working up the quarrel, <sup>Othello.</sup> the quarrel itself, and the drunkenness of Cassio, are violent intrusions upon the decorum of tragedy.

Cassio, like a tame gudgeon, swallows the bait laid for him as easily as any designing knave could wish, and makes as foolish a figure as any hot-headed, inebriated fool we have met with: we don't say that nature's bounds are at all violated, but we conceive such pictures unworthy the more delicate and masterly beauties of this piece: if any thing can palliate critical resentment, it must be the respectable figure that Othello makes in suppressing the riot; Iago's able hypocrisy, which artfully criminales the friend he seems to excuse; and Cassio's inimitable reflections when he is, rather miraculously, restored to reason; Iago's urging him to sue for his place again, through Desdemona's influence, is a deep and sensible train laid, full of seeming advantage, fraught with perils and death; his turning the easy, benevolent disposition of Desdemona into the materials of ruin for herself and Cassio, is the very essence of diabolical contrivance,—Roderigo's entrance seems calculated for no other purpose than to keep him in some degree of remembrance, but Iago's conclusion of the act, shews intricate complication, and great depth of design.

From several scenes scattered through our author's plays, we are apt to imagine, he trifled with propriety to relax his genius, what else could give birth to what we meet at the beginning of the third act, a clown, bandying strange quibbles, and quaint conceits

*Othello.*

ceits, with some serenading musicians; if Shakespeare's audience absolutely required such pitiful dialogue, such puppet-shew wit, taste must have been in a very gothic state, truly; and the question naturally follows, how the admirers of such peddling dialogue, could relish the sublimer flights of his genius; we might as well suppose one ear to be equally delighted with a solo by Giardini, and the braying of an ass, the picking of a grindstone, or whetting of a saw: This act therefore very judiciously begins in representation with Desdemona, Emilia and Cassio, who we find has preferred his petition, and is promised countenance.—His diffident retreat upon Othello's entrance, is the natural, delicate effect of a sensible, ingenuous mind, conscious of transgression, and Iago's short remark upon that circumstance, exquisitely imagined; Desdemona's unlimited generosity of temper beams forth in her warm method of importuning the Moor in favour of his lieutenant, and while it recommends her to public favour, gives Iago's sinister designs additional force; Othello's compliance with her request, though cordial and affectionate, yet supports by its delay the consequence and resentment of an offended commander; an instantaneous pardon would have shewn too much pliancy in him, and must have debilitated the plot greatly.

Nothing can exceed Othello's beautiful exclamation on his wife's going off; it seems the involuntary effusion of abundant affection, which has sense and sincerity enough rather to vent its raptures in

the beloved object's absence, than weakly or flatteringly to her face; Iago's distant, subtle entrance upon the grand part of his design, is admirable, as is indeed the whole progress of this scene, wherein Othello shews much openness of temper and warmth of heart, both which his insidious ancient works on with great judgment and propriety; the doubts he raises with such hypocritical diffidence, are judiciously suggested, and Othello's impatient curiosity, extremely natural; Iago's reflections upon the superior value of a *good name*, to riches, are so well known, that quoting them would be superfluous—his picture of jealousy also is amazingly striking, and Othello's generous disdain on being supposed capable of so illiberal a passion, most nobly expressed—how peculiarly pleasing, nay instructive, is his speech to that purpose? I must present it to the candid reader.

Why, why is this?

Thinkst thou I'd make a life of jealousy,  
To follow still the changes of the moon  
With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt,  
Is once to be resolved. [Exchange me for a goat,  
When I shall turn the business of my soul,  
To such exsufflate and blown surmises,  
Matching thy inference] 'Tis not to make me jealous,  
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company;  
Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well;  
Where virtue is, these are most virtuous;  
Nor from mine own weak merits, will I draw  
The smallest fear, or doubt of her revolt.

For

*Othello.*

For she had eyes and chose me—no Iago  
 I'll see before I doubt—when I doubt—prove  
 And on the proof there is no more but this,  
 Away at once with Love and Jealousy.

The inclosed passage is generally omitted on the stage, and we apprehend properly—every thing which follows rises by such just degrees, and such compleat artifices are used to improve upon the Moor's unsuspecting nature, that though we must pity, we we can hardly blame the agitation he is thrown into—the introduction of Desdemona to interrupt the scene already long enough, both for the audience and performer, is very judicious; and the little circumstance of the handkerchief very well conceived; Iago's making it, though apparently insignificant, an instrument of importance, proves the author well acquainted with the nature of jealousy; indeed, it is astonishing how any critics could cavil at this incident, as some have done, after the following unanswerable apology for it;

—Trifles light as air  
 Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
 As proofs of holy writ.

Any person unacquainted with Shakespeare's astonishing ideas and unlimited expression, would suppose Othello had reached the top of his bent, in his conference with Iago already mentioned, yet we find him returning, filled with seven-fold rage, first against the person who has made him acquainted with his misery, and next against his unhappy injured wife—There never was, amidst many other unparalleled beauties, a more luxurious, figurative chi-

max.



*Othello.*

max of passion than what follows, and quite justifiable, though poetical; for Othello being enamoured of fame and the military character, which he supposes his present disgrace will render him unfit for; it naturally arises, that they should occur even in the very whirlwind of rage, which, on his seeing Iago, rises still higher, and carries the human heart as far as it can go upon such an occasion.

*I had been happy, if the general camp  
(Pioneers and all) had tasted her sweet body,  
So I had nothing known—Oh now for ever  
Farewel the tranquil mind!—Farewel content!  
Farewel the plumed troops and the big war,  
That make ambition virtue!—Oh farewel!  
Farewel the neighing steed and the shrill trump!  
The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,  
The royal banner, and all quality,  
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!  
And, oh ye mortal engines, whose rude throats  
Th' immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,  
Farewel!—Othello's occupation's gone!*

I could wish the two first lines, marked by Italics, had not conveyed an indelicate idea, which, if possible, is less allowable in tragic than comic compositions, though Shakespeare has unhappily loaded this excellent play with such.

Iago's subtle affectation of chagrin at Othello's boisterous treatment of him, and his blunt method of expression are refined strokes of policy to recal the moor's calmer reason; and at the same time plant the dagger still deeper in his heart—After this line of Iago's, “But how, how satisfied, my lord?” I wish he was to go forward into his  
next

next speech, by which a wretched breach of decency would be avoided; his expression I cannot venture to quote, and in that speech also his mention of goats and monkeys, &c. should undoubtedly be retrenched.

Where he is describing Cassio's dream, the picture is drawn in much too glaring colours; the painting need not have been so strong for a man of Othello's apparent quick conception and delicate sensibility; the handkerchief is extremely well introduced, and Othello's dreadful resolution, what might be reasonably expected from a precipitate, vindictive temper, perplexed with such violent extremes; however, we cannot approve the assimilation of his resolution to the Pontic sea, which never feels an ebb; though the thought is beautiful, it suits not the circumstance of character.

Why Æmilia, in the short scene with Desdemona, where Shakespeare has again produced his facetious, word-catching clown, should throw out a hint of Othello's being jealous, or why his wife should suggest a thought of jealousy of him, merely for losing an handkerchief, though a particular one, is not easy to account for; the re-entrance of Othello, teeming with confirmed rage, fills us with anxious expectation, and his being confined to the single circumstance of the handkerchief shows that our author knew how to make the smallest matters important; yet we know not for what reason magic should be placed in the web of it, unless to startle Desdemona, and to give the author an opportunity of indulging his fancy in some fine lines; Desdemona's

*Othello.*

mona's urging Cassio's suit at such a time is excellently contrived to inflame her husband still more ; and his pressing the point, that he supposes her afraid to hear through guilt, shews judgment equal to any other passage in the play.

The following speech of Æmilia is liable to two objections ; as the first line seems unnecessary to proclaim a gross breach of time, and next as those which come after exhibit a nauseous allusion.

'Tis not a year or two shews us a man,  
 They are all but stomach, and we are all but food ;  
 They eat us hungerly—and, when they're full,  
*They belch us up again.*

As to the influence drawn from the first line by some critics, that it places Othello's nuptials so far back as one of the periods therein mentioned, is, I apprehend, a strained interpretation ; for, if the lady who plays Æmilia lays any emphasis on the two marked words, and expresses the last most forceably—" 'Tis not a *year* or two shews us a " man,"—then the sense is obviously this ; How can you, who have been so short a space married, think of knowing the turns of a man's temper, which requires even years to explain ? The following scene, where Iago and Cassio are concerned, has nothing material in it, unless shewing more goodness of heart in Desdemona and more hypocrisy in Iago, who artfully seems to wonder at the storm himself has raised.

After this scene, which properly concludes the third act as it is played, Shakespeare brings in a mere excrescence of the plot, Bianca, Cassio's  
 cour-

*Othello.*

courtezan, of whom, being totally excluded from the stage, we shall say no more than express wonder how the author could incumber his piece with such a despicable non-essential.

As if the moor had not been sufficiently wrought up, which certainly he has been, Shakespeare, for several pages at the beginning of the fourth act, laboriously, and from several passages we may add, in a beastly manner, endeavours to throw fresh fuel on his flames, extending the matter to such a length as action could not render sufferable, and in many places tending to the ridiculous; wherefore we would recommend omission of every line which precedes — “Get me some poison, Iago;” the space of time since we have seen Othello before, and the temper he last appeared in, sufficiently justify his coming on here, fixed in the resolution of sacrificing his wife.

Lodovico appears deputed by the states of Venice on a very odd errand, no less than displacing Othello from the government of Cyprus, and substituting Cassio in his room; our author knew little of, or would not understand any sort of military regulation, when he could raise a simple lieutenant at once to be governor of an island, which was thought worthy the care of the general in chief, as we have reason for supposing Othello to be; indeed we can perceive no use for the new character of Lodovico; however, the scene where he first comes on, gives great scope of natural and powerful action in Othello, whose jealousy predominates over every other consideration; Iago’s

giving a bad impression of him to Lodovico, is much in character. [Othello.]

Othello's founding of Æmilia is very suitable, and his following interview with Desdemona, meltingly pathetic. Iago's viperous heart is rendered, if possible, more odious by his pretended concern for Desdemona's pitiable situation, and the miss between him and Æmilia rises well to shew her resistive spirit in contrast to the gentleness of her mistress.—After Desdemona has made an interesting exculpatory appeal to Heaven, the ladies give place to Rodorigo, who finding himself dallied with, upbraids Iago with sinister dealings ; as we wished from the beginning, not to see this disgraceful mushroom of tragedy, we shall only say of this scene, that it serves the intended purpose well enough.

The Moor is presented to view, at his next entrance, in quite a different mode of behaviour, he is determined on his great revenge, the plan is laid, and therefore very naturally, he wears a partial calm, in external appearance, which is like that generally proceeding the elementary shock of an earthquake ; the prologue of more assured and terrible destruction ; if Desdemona was to chaunt the lamentable ditty, and speak all that Shakespeare has allotted for her in this scene, an audience, as Foigard says, would not know whether to laugh or cry, and Æmilia's quibbling dissertation on cuckold-making, is contemptible to the last degree.

The fifth act commences with Iago appointing Rodorigo to the honourable post of an assassin, which we think somewhat like placing a serpent's  
sting

*Othello.*

sting in the tail of a butterfly ; a strange jumble of events ensue, amidst which Iago plays at bo-peep with murder, and secures the poor coxcomb he has robbed, by privately stabbing him ; the introduction of Othello at a window is quite superfluous, and indeed all these transactions might have been referred more properly to narration, which would, nay does fall very naturally in at the unraveling of the plot : I own myself desirous of having the fifth act begin with the bed scene ; and what Æmelia leaves untold of the fray, would come extremely well from Cassio : If the whole was done as SHAKESPEARE wrote it, and Bianca produced howling over her gallant, the scene would be intolerable ; even as it is, much shortened, it rather intrudes upon more material feelings.

There is somewhat affectingly solemn in Desdemona's situation, and Othello's appearance when she is in bed ; pity never received a more powerful call than to see sleeping innocence at the brink of destruction ; nor did her tender ear ever catch sounds more pathetically interesting, than Othello's reflections previous to her waking ; every soft sensation is put into a tremulative state ; and the susceptible spectator must feel an exquisite share of painful pleasure, to see a determined murderer who moves us more to compassion than detestation, which should attend such actions, shews that our author had when he pleased, an almost magic power over the human heart, and could place the passions upon reason's throne.—No conversation was ever more in nature, than what passes between the Moor and his

wife? every half line, for brevity of expression, is most judiciously adopted, recommends him to our favour, without making her less pitiable. *Othello.*

The act of murder is succeeded by a most beautiful wildness of confusion; nothing could be more happily fancied that Æmilia's approach at such a crisis; the scene with her also is carried on with peculiar spirit and propriety—the revival of Desdemona from a state of suffocation, and her expiring without any fresh violence, we apprehend to be rather absurd, therefore highly approve Othello's stabbing her with a dagger, after the words—"I that am cruel" drawing blood, accounts naturally for gaining power of speech, and may yet be mortal—speaking of Cassio's freedom with his wife, the Moor uses some very gross expressions—all the remainder of this act exhibits an interesting train of explanations, which though already known to the audience, please, as they lead to strict poetical justice; however Othello's violent exclamation, beginning, "whip me ye devils," is rather bombastical and profane—Æmilia's death is quite unnecessary, as it cannot tend to render Iago more detestable than he is already, nor has she done any thing to merit punishment—wherefore it seems as if SHAKESPEARE'S tragic muse determined, like Renault in Venice Preserved, to spare neither sex nor age, and rejoiced, as Mr. Cumberland has it in his inimitable prologue of all prologues to the Brothers, to appear

From shoulder to the flank all drench'd in gore.

Not-

*Othello.*

Notwithstanding suicide is a real act of cowardice, an irrational and an irreligious escape from mental pain, yet we can hardly blame Othello for applying that desperate remedy to such complicated woes ; and there is something very noble in reminding the state of Venice with almost his last words, that he finished his life in the same manner, which he had once used to vindicate the public honour of his masters ; Iago is most properly denoted, to utter contempt as well as abhorrence, and reserving him for legal punishment in its utmost severity, is more consonant to poetical justice, than adding him to the heap of the slain would have been ; it was extremely judicious also to wrap up the whole in one speech after Othello's death.

This tragedy, upon the whole, contains many passages sublimely beautiful ; a number very trifling, some absurd, and too many licentious, we mean as written by Shakespeare—except transporting the characters from Venice to Cyprus, which might have easily been avoided ; the plan is sufficiently regular, pleasingly progressive, and well calculated to touch most sensibly the feelings of horror and pity ; the personages are well contrasted, and co-operate properly to the main action, though Roderigo, Bianca, and the clown disgrace their company much ; the stage, however, has banished two of them, and if the third was consigned to oblivion, it would be for the author's credit.

Indeed it is to be wished, that instead of so many syllable hunting editions of Shakespeare as have appeared ; a committee of able critics had united their  
abili-



abilities to strike out the insignificant and offensive passages which so often occur ; this would bring his merit into a more compact, uniform view, and considerably lessen the heavy public tax arising from extending his works at least three volumes more than are creditable to himself, or useful to his readers ; such an edition regulated by all those already published, without the incumbrance of multiplied, conjectural notes, unless there are very obscure allusions, if prepared by impartial ability, would be an acceptable offering to delicate taste, and must, we apprehend, meet what it would certainly deserve, general success—such a work we would cordially recommend to Mr. GARRICK, and such suitable assistants as his extensive connections in the literary world must easily procure him—we hope what is here offered will be considered as a hint only, founded on united regard for the father of the drama, the delicate dignity of the stage, and the morals of readers as well as auditors.

Othello, though he does not require all the powers of tragical expression, certainly calls for several of the greatest—he is open, generous, free, subject to violent feelings, not, as himself expresses it, *easily jealous*, yet roused by that pernicious passion above all violent restraint ; weak in his confidence, partial in discernment, fatal in resolution—if we may venture to say, that any performer ever was born for one part in particular, it must have been Mr. BARRY for the Moor ; his figure was a good apology for Desdemona's attachment, even if she had not seen a fair, instead of black visage in his mind, and the harmony of  
of

*Othello.*

of his voice to tell such a tale as he describes, must have raised favourable prejudice in any one who had an ear or heart to feel.

There is a length of periods and an extravagance of passion in this part, not to be found in any other, for so many successive scenes, to which which Mr. BARRY appeared peculiarly suitable, he happily exhibited the hero, the lover, and the distracted husband ; he rose through all the passions to the utmost extent of critical imagination, yet still appeared to leave an unexhausted fund of expression behind ; his rage and tenderness were equally interesting, but when he uttered these words, “rude am I in my speech,” in tones, *as soft as feathered snow that melted as they fell*, we could by no means allow the sound an echo to the sense—though we are not at all fond of this gentleman’s action in general, yet respecting both it and attitude, particularly when called by Æmilia after the murder, he was in this character extremely agreeable.

Mr. QUIN—I am sorry to mention him so often disadvantageously—was—though Othello is in the vale of years, not a very probable external appearance to engage Desdemona, his declamation was as heavy as his person ; his tones monotonous ; his passions bellowing, his emphasis affected, and his under strokes growling—I remember once to see this esteemed performer play the Moor, in a large powdered major wig, which, with the black face, made such a magpye appearance of his head, as tended greatly to laughter ; one stroke however, was not amiss,

amiss, coming on in white gloves, by pulling off which the black hands became more realized.

Mr. Ross and Mr. POWELL were pretty much on a footing in this part ; the former figured it better, and spoke most of the passages as well ; but the latter appealed more to the heart, and wore the passions with natural grace ; however both were very far short of that capital merit, a London audience have a right to expect.

If it was possible for spectators to be pleased with meaning alone, uttered through very ungracious, inadequate organs, Mr. SHERIDAN might stand high in public estimation ; but execution being as necessary as conception, we can only afford him the praise of barren propriety.

Iago is excellently drawn as a slow, subtle, irascible villain, dead to every good, or tender feeling, mean, hypocritical and vindictive, base enough to do any bad action underhand, but void of resolution to avow or vindicate his wickedness—to paint this complicate, we may add monstrous character happily in representation, is by no means easy ; Mr. RYAN in his plausibility and ease was very commendable, but appeared greatly deficient in design ; Mr. SPARKS was heavy and laborious, Mr. SHERIDAN is excellent in the soliloquies, but void of ease and insinuation in the dialogue ; Mr. HOLLAND hunting after a meaning he never found, and Mr. LEE crowds in a multitude of meanings the author never intended ; thus we introduce Mr. MACKLIN to an indisputable preeminence for understanding the part as well, and expressing it through the whole

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with

*Othello.*

with more equal and suitable merit, than any other performer we have seen ; and this we do not advance upon private opinion but from comparative views of the effect wrought by him and others upon various audiences : to couch our praise in very odd terms, he has got the indisputable, involuntary applause of as many curses in Iago, as in Shylock.

Cassio is a very amiable, but, except his drunken scene which we esteem disgraceful to tragedy, a very uninteresting personage, the late Mr. PALMER did him great justice, and the present Mr. PALMER, a rising young Actor does not fall much behind in execution, to which is added the advantage of a much more soldier-like appearance, a person much better framed to make women false.

The babbling hound Roderigo receives considerable pleasantry from Mr. DYER ; but if it is not prostituting Mr. KING's sterling merit, to mention him first in such a part, we must give him the lead, and say, that if the reptile can be made sufferable, it is his by his performance : which, equal to some very arduous tasks, can nevertheless when occasion calls, condescend agreeably and make trifles interesting : this is no small point of praise ; for many capital actors, thinking a character beneath their dignity, throw contempt on it and the audience ; but Mr. KING's great good sense and respect for the public, prevents him from so ridiculous a start of vanity—I wish every theatrical gentleman would follow the excellent example, and comparatively speaking, take as much pains with two or three lengths, as two or three and twenty.

Brabantio while concerned is of some importance, though his complaint is rather childish; yet even the weak tears of a father claim respect and call upon general sympathy, as they spring from the fair fountain of paternal affection: Mr. BERRY, though blubbing in grief was his characteristic fault, stood well in this part; we have had the anxiety to see Mr. ANDERSON murder, and the pain to hear that costly tragedian Mr. LOVE growl it forth; but never wish to feel such intellectual misery again.

Desdemona is a part of no shining qualifications, every point of satisfaction that can arise from her unvarying gentleness, and more than criticism could claim, may be enjoyed from Mrs. BARRY, who looks and expresses it much better than Mrs. YATES, to whom also we must prefer, some years ago, Mrs. BELLAMY in this character.

Æmilia has much more life than her mistress and shews a well contrasted spirit; Mrs. HOOKINS does not fall short of our wishes, and we remember to have received some pleasure from that uncultivated genius Mrs. HAMILTON in representing her.

To offer a general opinion of this tragedy, we deem it, properly retrenched, a most noble entertainment on the stage, and a luxurious, yet wholesome feast for the closet; it rather wants business, and therefore in some places lies heavy on action; but it keeps an excellent moral in view, and forcibly inculcates it all along; the fatal effects of jealousy; by well wrought passions, elevated sentiments and a dreadful catastrophe shewing the very dangerous

consequences of indulging, even upon the most probable proofs, such pernicious, ungovernable prejudices in the human heart.

Having through an unaccountable lapse of memory forgot to mention Mr. Mossor, both in this tragedy and Macbeth; it is hoped the reader will accept our opinion of that gentleman here; though not in the regular course of our plan—no performer in our remembrance possesses a voice of more strength and variety than Mr. Mossor, and we believe he understands his author as well as any one; yet an insuperable awkwardness of action, and a most irksome laboriousness of expression, render him peculiarly offensive to chaste judgment in Macbeth; a number of unlucky attempts at attitude, ungraceful distortions of feature, an overstrained affectation of consequence, and many ill-applied painful pauses, banishing nature, loudly proclaim the mere actor—in Othello, though liable to several of the same objections, we deem him much happier, the Moor's wildness of passion he describes extremely well, and under all disadvantages most certainly stands second to, though far beneath Mr. BARRY.

## LOVE IN A VILLAGE.

An OPERA, by Mr. BICKERSTAFF.

**T**HOUGH as advocates for nature, we have declared critical war against operatical compositions in general—an instance of dangerous resolution at present—we only mean to try such pieces as they appear, considering the songs as part of the dialogue—the piece now before us has met with very uncommon success, from what cause it has arisen, whether indulgence of the town, merits of performance, or excellence of the author, may probably appear from investigation.

This opera has suffered heavy charges of plagiarism; many we know to be true, but the greater part, we hope, are false; however, suppose every imputation just, the author might at least make the defence a young clergyman did, who being reproached with preaching one of Tillotson's sermons, replied,—“Sir, if you know this matter, not one in a  
 “hundred of my congregation does; I am cer-  
 “tain, it is much better than any thing my own  
 “head could produce; and I hope you will allow  
 “I do my flock more justice by borrowing else-  
 “where, than palming my own stuff upon them.”  
 Far be it from us to suppose this absolutely our author's case, we only mention the matter in a friendly way to shew that if it really was, he has a very *modest* and good defence to offer.

This

*Love in a Village.*

This piece opens with an air between two ladies, wherein the pictures of hope are most amazingly diversified—in the first verse she is mentioned as a nurse, a fairy, a painted vapour, a glow-worm fire, and a temperate sweet—in the second she comes upon us, a soft soother, a balmy cordial, a bright prospect, and a *sure* friend—in the third we find her a kind deceiver, a dealer out of pleasures, and a proprietress of dreams; now admitting every one of these allusions justifiable, though I doubt whether a kind, or any other *deceiver*, can be the *surest* friend—yet certainly there never was such a figurative heap crammed into so narrow a compass by any other writer—strong effect of luxuriant fancy!

The ensuing dialogue of this scene, which is pleasant and natural enough, lets us agreeably into some light concerning the ladies themselves, the old justice and his maiden sister; but I am sorry our bard slipped by decency to make two well-bred young ladies speak in the following words—“this *libidinous* father of yours, he follows me about the house like a tame goat,” to which the magistrate’s daughter, rather knowingly replies—“I’ll assure you he has been a wag in his time.” Rosetta’s spirit of freedom in love is pretty, and the reason she assigns for her occasional elopement very satisfactory. Lucinda’s touching upon young Meadows’s passion for her falls well in, and extends our view of the plot in a pleasing manner; it gives Rosetta also some scope of acting in her feigned resentment at the supposition.

Young



*Love in a Village.*

we only offer a hope that no young person will receive it as a prudential maxim—the four last lines of the song terminate in a strange awkward jingle—*best, cost, blest, lost.*

The entrance of justice Woodcock is very characteristic, affords a good variation of circumstance, and throws the lovers into an unexpected dilemma; Lucinda's device to impose upon the old gentleman, though not at all new, is at least well adapted, the self-sufficient magistrate's abrupt treatment of Eustace before he knows any thing of him is a natural consequence of ignorant pride buoyed up with a commission of the peace; and that very pride making him enter into a contradictory altercation with his precise sister, produces very humorous effects, and indeed useful ones to the young pair who are sheltered by the very pains Mrs. Deborah takes to defeat their happiness; this is making a whimsical, and very natural use of the justice's oddity; if any person would wish a more laughable scene than this their risible faculties must be unusually rigid—however we must blame Lucinda for mentioning *five brats* at a birth, in her song to the old maid, it is not within the pale of delicacy; when Woodcock gives a specimen of his singing I wish so gross a degradation had not been committed upon Damon and Phillida; besides tho' sung by a humourist I don't think it very suitable to his daughter's presence, what follows after the old man's departure between the lovers, means very little except to mention that his obstinacy is a circumstance much in  
their

their favour—in their reciprocal declaration of unchanging constancy a line which might be censured creeps in.

And fair creation sink in night

When I my dear deceive.

The passion could not be very lasting which only continued till night shrouded creation, which, to our view, it does once every four and twenty hours; at which time the sun ceases to spread his light, and the stars very frequently seem to leave their orbits; if this alludes to nature's dissolution, as we suppose, the expression shows too great a stretch of poetic licence: in short, the whole song, though imitative of, is infinitely beneath that of Handel's *Susanna*, whose tune it has borrowed.

Rosetta's soliloquy, examining into the state of her heart, is pretty enough; the ensuing scene between her and Young Meadows also, has a share of spirited natural pleasantry; that reciprocal pride which agitates the lovers, and throws them into fretful altercation is justly conceived, and by no means ill expressed; nor does the spirit evaporate by being drawn out too far; the justice's appearance falls in well, and occasions them to huddle up a kind of reconciliation.

Justice Woodcock's amorous attempt upon Rosetta is laughable enough; but we wish the young lady had not discovered so strong an idea of his purpose, as to let fall these words, "if ever I was to make a *flip*, it should be with an elderly gentleman"—indeed all the remainder of this scene, though arch,

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has much too strong a taint of indelicacy; Hawthorn however changes it for the better with his blunt agreeable raillery—Sir William Meadows's letter forwards the plot—Woodcock's self-sufficiency in supposing himself so wise that none of his children would do an indiscreet thing is whimsical, and Hawthorn's vindication of youth sensible. But of all the poetical thefts ever committed, of all instances of mending things for the worse, as my countryman has it, sure nothing is equal to what we shall produce; Hawthorn sings as follows:

My Dolly was the fairest *thing*,  
 Her breath disclosed the sweets of spring;  
 And if for summer you would seek,  
 'Twas painted in her eye, her cheek.  
 Her swelling bosom tempting ripe,  
 Of fruitful autumn was the type;  
 But when my tender tale I told,  
 I found her heart was winter cold.

The word *thing* at the end of the first line, tho' justified by Virgil's noted mention of woman, is a most strange expression adapted to a favourite mistress; and however summer may be allowed to glow on the *cheeks* of beauty, yet we presume it too glaring a figure for the eye, which is not here ornamented with sparkling vivacity, but the meridian blaze—mark now what follows—assimilating his mistress's bosom to *autumnal* ripeness, by which we find the *fair thing* was arrived at, or past, the full bloom of life, sure such a compliment was never paid before; but our author having begun with spring, was determined to lug in the four seasons successively at any rate.

The beautiful song which gave birth to this strange imitation runs thus in the Village Opera :

My Dolly was the snow drop fair,  
Curling endive was her hair ;  
The fragrant jessamine her breath,  
White kidney beans her even teeth.  
Two daisies were her lovely eyes,  
Her breasts in swelling mushrooms rise ;  
Her waist the strait and upright fir,  
But all her heart was cucumber.

If we consider this as sung by a Gardener, the allusions appear strikingly characteristic, though comparing the eyes to *daisies*, does not convey a very obvious or justifiable idea ; however, it is impossible upon the whole to imagine how any writer could stumble upon so inadequate an imitation, without any manner of necessity for so doing, unless mere barrenness of invention, and a resolution to make Hawthorn sing at all events, in a plaintive strain too, quite different from what he commendably preserves through the rest of the piece,

In the scene between Hodge and Madge we find more brutality breaking out from the clown, than humour from either of them ; however, his song is not without merit ; Rosetta's intervention creates a kind of bustle tolerably agreeable, and throws Hodge into a whimsical dilemma ; the reflections and song of Rosetta upon his behaviour to Margery are extremely pretty, exhibiting indisputable truth, and some useful hints to the fair sex ; her compassion for the deluded girl speaks sensibility and goodness of heart—Madge's sudden design of trying London

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to repair her misfortunes, is not at all unnatural though it seems strangely abrupt.

The conversation between Lucinda and Rosetta, furnishes information that a plan is laid for the former to elope with Eustace.—Hawthorn, though the occasion of his entrance appears dubitable, is judiciously introduced as what he says, not only raises an agreeable curiosity in the young ladies, but the audience also ; some sensible remarks upon marriage and the qualifications of a husband ensue, which concludes the second act with a very pleasing and spirited trio supported adequately by the several characters.

Sir William Meadows, a hearty, plain old gentleman begins the third act with Hawthorn, their scene means nothing more than to throw some glimmering of light on the plot ; indeed the song with which it concludes has considerable merit, perhaps the most, for solid sense and natural expression of any in the whole piece ; Rosetta's change of dress seems to have no meaning except to please the vanity of external appearance, so incident to most ladies on, and indeed off the stage ; her confession of love for young Meadows even in his servile capacity is ingenuous ; and her pride objecting to rank only, shows commendable spirit, by Hodge we find that Lucinda's scheme of elopement is discovered by her aunt Mrs. Deborah, this gives an agreeable turn of sympathetic concern in Rosetta, who generously feels for a friend, though her own concerns are in so prosperous a line of direction.

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The old maid's haughty rigid treatment of her niece is very characteristic and the display of her own housewifely disposition truly humorous; her reflections upon the ill effects of reading are the natural produce of a narrow mind, uncultivated by education, yet vain of its defective powers, Lucinda at last sets her aunt at defiance but upon what principle or what the thought is she hints at, we know not.

Hodge's soliloquy means very little unless to acquaint us with his hopes of Rosetta's favour, which from the great change in her appearance, and her behaviour to him just before, we think he has little right to expect; the song is a very strange insignificant jumble of rustic licentiousness, containing some truth, little sense and less humour.

Young Meadows, with as unmeaning a change of dress, as Rosetta's now appears and expresses uneasiness suitable to an anxious lover at his mistress's delay; the simile in his song which likens beauty enshrining merit, to a curious casket containing gems, deserves rather a better epithet than pretty, but the versification is not so easy as it might have been: the lover's surprize at seeing his father instead of the lady is a well conceived circumstance, and what follows does much credit to his honest disinterested feelings; Sir William's assumed displeasure works up the conversation pleasingly and Hawthorn is a good medium to keep up the design of coming at young Meadows's real inclinations.

Rosetta

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Rosetta is introduced at a happy point of time and the discovery that the young people's inclinations and their parents intentions exactly coincide is very well unfolded ; in the midst of her own happiness remembering Lucinda's perplexed situation, and interesting her friends for that young lady, throws fresh light on Rosetta's character, and recommends her to an increase of favour.—Hawthorn's resolution, expressed in his song, of not giving up his rural enjoyments for the bustle, smoke and noise of London ; is the just effusion of a disengaged mind tolerably expressed.

The next scene, though short, contains considerable humour ; the oddity of Woodcock and his sister is extremely well preserved, and well play'd upon by the lovers ; the dialogue runs judiciously into a pit pat strain and introduces the catastrophe pleasantly, Sir William's character of Eustace justifies his claim to Lucinda, and making the justice's obstinate contempt of of Mrs. Deborah's understanding a motive for agreeing to his daughters marriage, closes the piece as an audience would wish, without any forced incident.

The unities of time and place are well enough observed in this piece, the plot is regularly carried on, and though it is rather too simple cannot be objected to as uninteresting or tedious ; the scenes are ranged in an agreeable state of connection without superfluity or scantiness ; the dialogue has ease and some gleams of spirit, but not a spark of wit ; the songs in general exhibit the  
most

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most trite, hackneyed sentiments, in awkward versification; with several slips of grammar, and not a shadow of genius; as to the essence of dramatic merit, a moral, there is no trace of it to be discovered—the young ones very romantically run away from their parents and for such a notable breach of filial duty they have their wishes fulfilled; Lucinda does all she can towards an elopement and gets her lover too; though there are no very pernicious inferences arising from these incidents, yet they recommend indiscretion, and are void of any useful tendency; and brings them at best under the insipid denomination of merely inoffensive.

With respect to characters, the justice is a well drawn, opinionated, ignorant, positive old coxcomb; mostly in the wrong without any ill meaning, and when in the right, void of sensible intention; Sir William Meadows a pliant, good humoured baronet, in whom some peculiarity is attempted, without the least degree of success, unless most palling repetition of “let me never do an ill turn” lays any claim to merit—Young Meadows is a mere loving milkop, with nothing but disinterestedness to mark him, and yet Eustace is much more a cypher—Hodge is a clown moderately well depicted; Rosetta and Lucinda two young ladies of independent principles who think they have an exclusive right to please themselves, without the least appeal to parental jurisdiction, and Mrs. Deborah a formal antiquated virgin, vain of judgement which she has not, and maliciously.



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ciously fond of preventing that happiness in others, she never has enjoyed herself and despairs of ever tasting.

The part of Woodcock was doubtless designed for Mr. SHUTER, and I presume it will be admitted that no author ever judged an actor's capability better; there is a strong peculiarity of humour most happily hit off in performance; the character owes its commanding influence much more to features happily laughable, and expression truly comic, than the writer's genius; and without exaggeration it may be said that Mr. SHUTER in this whimsical justice, must have force enough to dilate even the rigid muscles of methodism; if it was possible to transplant a groaning congregation from Moorfields, or Tottenham Court, into Covent Garden, even while their ears tingled with a fire and brimstone harangue; they must unbend their gloomy brows, and smilingly obey the irresistible force of matchless humour.

Young Meadows has very little acting merit, therefore is well adapted to that faintness of expression so discoverable in Mr. MATTOCKS, who nevertheless supports the songs, and even speaks better than Mr. DUBELLAMY, a gentleman we never wish to hear *speak* in public, both in justice to himself and to the audience: Mr. DODD of Drury Lane did this part much better than either of the performers above mentioned; there is an agreeable manner and a sensible vivacity about him, that the others are entire strangers to.

Hawthorn

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Hawthorn as he lived, so we may say he died with that truly great intelligent English singer Mr. BEARD; who expressed open hearted glee with amazing pleasantness and propriety; every person in this light of comparison appears to great disadvantage; however Mr. MORRIS is far from contemptible, indeed gives a much better idea of the character than any other person we have seen.

That inoffensive personage Eustace finds very tolerable accommodation with Mr. DYER; and it is no small degree of merit to preserve such an unseasoned character from the charge of insipidity: Mr. DUNSTALL's Hodge deserves a great deal of praise, and yet we cannot help thinking if Mr. KING was often seen in the part he would discover considerably more of critical humour; Sir William Meadows may be done by any body without much chance of praise or censure.

Lucinda has too little acting for Mrs. MATROCKS, who makes as much of the speaking as it will admit and supports the songs agreeably—Mrs. PINTO's Rosetta, as to the singing, unexceptionable; but for the rest, mercy deliver us! the part will not readily appear more delicately pleasing throughout than by Mrs. BADDELY's performance, whose figure, voice and manner all happily concur to feast both eyes and ears—of the country girl we can only say that Mrs. BAKER makes a very pretty Madge.

The general merit of *Love in a Village* we must confine merely to being inoffensive as to its tenden-

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 cy, with some spirit, an agreeable share of ease and regularity ; most of the characters speak as they ought and the circumstances are well connected but if we look for sterling sense, brilliant wit with keen useful satire ; which so much abound in the Beggar's Opera ; we must say that this piece is nothing more than showy base mettle, favoured with a very indulgent stamp of public favour to give it a kind of critical currency ; to which, we apprehend, select music adapted with real taste contributed not a little ; any person who reads the Village Opera may soon perceive what use Mr. Bickerstaff has made of it.



# ROMEO AND JULIET.

Altered from SHAKESPEARE by GARRICK.

**A**S we have already hinted it is matter of astonishment how Shakespeare could be so negligent of uniformity, or so servile to depraved taste, as to incumber scenes, which reach true sublimity, with others that may justly be styled poetical babbling; and it is equally odd, how the audiences which relished one, could possibly digest the other, however we have self evident proof of this lamentable inequality in most of his best pieces.

Romeo and Juliet, in which our author has taken very unusual, and very successful pains with his female character, has many weeds in its original state to choak up some beautiful flowers of genius; we may venture to say without pruning it would have made but an awkward appearance in representation; Otway, a most excellent painter of the tender passions, saw its luxuriance in that point, felt and transplanted whole scenes into his plot of Caius Marius, which was an act of gothic depredation; producing a most unnatural connection which only served to prove that endeavouring to keep pace with Shakespeare he fell far beneath himself.

We have seen an alteration of this tragedy by Mr. Theophilus Cibber which was not void of

merit ; and we recollect some tolerable endeavours of Mr. SHERIDAN for that purpose but Mr. GARRICK appearing our author's most capable friend, we shall stick to what he has enriched the stage, and obliged the public with.

Notwithstanding a quarrel among domesticks, in consequence of animosities which prevail in the several families they are employed by, is highly natural, we can by no means countenance even that small part of the ludicrous scene with which the play now begins; nothing can be expressed in more characteristic terms ; but we think it an ungracious commencement, nay unnecessary ; for the enmity of the Capulets is sufficiently made known, without such mobbish scuffling; wherefore, we cannot but be of opinion, that the necessity of some strolling companies, which for want of number obliges them to cry, “ down with the Capulets, &c.” behind the scenes, forces them to an amendment—Benvolio and Montague should certainly appear first, and their short scene, which contains many beauties, would be a delicate opening, indeed what precedes is a farcical prelude to grave events, not unlike a merry andrew skipping before a funeral.

Romeo's abstracted disposition of mind is prettily introduced through Montague's affectionate concern, and Benvolio's friendly feelings, which appear so amply verified in the course of the play, not only recommend himself but the persons spoken of to favour ; Capulet and Paris are only introduced to shew that the latter is encouraged as

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a suitor to Juliet, consequently their brief interview offers nothing worth a particular remark.

Mercutio, that peculiar offspring of spirited imagination, even at his entrance strikes out the path of whim ; Romeo's entrance and the questions occasioned by it, show much natural ease ; the breaks in that speech where he asks about the fray, and mentions his love are masterly ; but we apprehend his coming to the subject thus at once, is no way consistent with that impenetrable secrecy charged against him in a former scene : indeed concealing it from his father is not surprizing ; but after avoiding Benvolio when single, to communicate the point immediately before another person, and such an humourist too ; from whom he can expect little but ridicule, rather o'ersteps, as we suppose, the bounds of natural propriety.

A touch of superstitious weakness we find thrown into Romeo's character in the mention of a dream, but as it introduces so beautiful a description of the queen of dreams, her equipage and various influence upon various characters, we must rather be pleased than offended : transcribing Mercutio's whole speech would infringe too much on our resolution of very limited quotation, and yet we scarce know how to decline it ; examining the proportions however is not dispensible, for though we may admire general beauty, it would be wrong to pass unnoticed what appear to us particular lapses.

Poetry in her descriptions should not only delight the imagination but if requisite should bear optical examination

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examination upon canvass; now let us view Queen Mab, she is described as being the size of an agatstone which, as it is for the fore finger of an alderman cannot be supposed very minute; indeed her chariot, the shell of a hazlenut, confirms this Idea; yet she, her waggoner, waggon and chariot by the by are strangely confounded, the vehicle and all are drawn by a team of little atomies; whose number by the word *team* is limited to six or eight; though five hundred of these same atomies, *ottomites* I have heard them called—would not make up her majesty's consistence alone—the traces of small spider's web may do well enough; but how it happens that the collars, which in harness are the most substantial part, should be reduced to watry moonshine beams, we cannot say—this may be deemed word catching, but if we consider that fancy in her most whimsical flights, may without fear of limitation take judgment to her aid, it follows that any deviation however slight, however surrounded with beauties, should be pointed out, and for that reason only the above hints have been suggested: as to Mab's operation upon the parson, lovers &c. nothing can be more humorous or sensible, affording the best original for dreams; those thoughts and wishes which most impress our waking imaginations—before I pass from this celebrated speech I cannot avoid mentioning an extraordinary circumstance which plainly tends to shew that men of very sound understanding often do very weak things.

Mr. SHERIDAN when he did, or attempted to do Romeo, an undertaking he never should have disgraced

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graced himself with ; some three or four and twenty years since in Dublin, by an amazing stroke of injudicious monopoly annexed this whimsical picture to his own sighing, lovesick part ; and what carries surprize still higher is, that he should do so when it was extremely difficult to say which shewed most absurdity, his taking the speech, or his pedantic manner of speaking it.

Taking Romeo to Capulet's ball by way of diverting his imagination, and that proving the means to enflame his passions, are well designed incidents towards opening and carrying on the plot.

Lady Capulet and Nurse appear next ; however great a favourite the loquacious old dame may be with the majority of an audience ; criticism and taste unite in the wish that no such personage had appeared—indelicacy is very natural to nurses, but why the reformer of this play should have retained swearing by her maidenhead we cannot think—Juliet's introduction has a degree of pleasing simplicity in it, and we apprehend a very agreeable useful scene might have been struck out between the mother and daughter on the subject of marriage ; far preferable to Mrs. Nurse's trifling rhapsody of circumstantial nothingness ; which though extremely natural, means nothing but to raise some laughs, which we deem highly disgraceful to the nature, bent and dignity of tragic compositions ; besides the old lady's hint of Juliet's falling backwards, is only fit for the ears of a parcel of gossips who have wished decency good night and locked the door upon her.

Gregory's



Gregory's familiar low comedy message which concludes the scene, is totally inconsistent with common English decorum, much more the pride and distance of Italian quality; Nurse from her station may claim some liberty, but such headlong behaviour from other servants is very censurable.

Capulet in welcoming the guests to his masquerade speaks to the ladies of their corns in a manner which may be jocular yet it is not polite; but I suppose having their faces covered is his apology; the little dispute about time between the old fellows is well suggested; Tibalt's fiery temper shews itself properly upon distinguishing Romeo's voice; and he is restrained from violence upon very hospitable and just principles by Capulet who manifests commendable spirit—Romeo's address to Juliet is modestly affectionate, and her replies cordially delicate; however with respect to the liking she takes, we must suppose love flies with lightning's swiftest wings into her breast; it rather indicates feelings of forward susceptibility—it is judicious to separate the lovers after a short interchange of words, and Juliet's method of finding out who was her new favourite very proper.

At the beginning of the second act Romeo presents himself in a state of amorous pensiveness, viewing the mansion of his mistress; and upon going off is sought for by his two friends, one of whom, Mercutio, in the flow of raillery throws out some expressions highly exceptionable; we heartily wish he had conjured no further than the lady's foot and leg;

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leg; and that he had mentioned some other place for raising a spirit, than what he points at in the next speech—two passages more unpardonably gross than those hinted are scarce to be met; they call loudly for obliteration; it is not what such a man as Mercutio might probably speak we are to consider, but what is fit for readers to peruse, or spectators to hear.

In the next scene Romeo, who has romantically leaped the garden wall of a known foe, without any leave or assignation from the lady, is by the poet's unlimited power brought to a sight of Juliet; who, by a happy effort of imagination, is made to reveal her love for Romeo, not suspecting his presence; her justification of him from the quarrel of their families is sensible and fanciful; nor do we know any thing better conceived than his sudden reply upon mentioning that his name is the only impediment to her wishes and his own.

The diffident turn of expression he uses on being charged with an abrupt approach is extremely beautiful, and Juliet's apprehension for his coming into so hazardous a place very natural; indeed the whole scene is so interestingly tender—that we think even a despairing old maid could not see it without some sympathy: to trace all its beauties would force us into a tedious repetition of multiplied eulogiums and leave us little to say on the following parts of the piece; therefore let it suffice to observe that the lovers express mutual affection, and exchange their vows in a most becoming manner; the interruption

by nurse causes a fine agitation of spirits, and disjointed eagerness of expression ; if in such a glare of beauties, there be one more striking than another, it is that of Juliet's forgetting, or pretending to forget why she called Romeo back.

Fryar Lawrence is introduced with a just degree of benign, moral dignity ; and his short dissertation on the contraste qualities of particular herbs, which he aptly compares to those seeds of virtue and vice, which inhabit the human breast, is not only beautiful, but pregnant with much solid sense and edifying truth ; in nothing is providence more delightfully manifested than in the vegetable world ; nor can any subject lead speculation into a more captivating maze ; the assimilation of grace and rude will, to poison and medicine is nervously philosophical, luxuriantly instructive ; having said thus much in favour of the Fryar's soliloquy, we must lament, as absolute foes to dramatic rhimes, the mode of versification adopted, indeed the measure is not so monotonous for a speaker, as jingle in general is, yet we apprehend blank verse would suit nature, the author's sentiments, and the performer's utterance much better, by way of encouraging some abler pen to undertake so desirable an alteration we diffidently submit what follows to candid taste.

On frowning night the grey ey'd morning smiles,

Check'ring with streaks of light the eastern clouds :

Now ere the sun his burning eye advance

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To drink night's dews, and chear approaching day ;  
 This oſier cage muſt carefully be fill'd  
 With baleful weeds, and flowers of precious juice.  
 How wond'rous is the powerful grace repos'd,  
 Within the beauteous vegetable world !  
 Nor is there ought which ſprings from earth ſo vile,  
 But by ſome fair effect its birth repays  
 To parent earth : yet ſurely, miſapplied,  
 Becomes pernicious ; ſtumbling o'er abuſe :  
 Virtue herſelf, when tainted with exceſs,  
 May turn to vice ; and vice her form aſſume  
 By action dignified. Within the rind  
 Of this freſh blooming flow'r—death-pregnant poiſon  
 And ſalutary medicine reſide :  
 Being ſmelt it cheers with that ſenſe every part ;  
 But taſted, ſtops th' arreſted pulse of life :  
 In man as well as herbs we may perceive  
 Like contraſt foes encamp'd—grace and rude will :  
 And where the latter is predominant,  
 That canker death with ſpeed the plant deſtroys.

What paſſes between the Fryar and Romeo is ſuitable and pleaſing ; we muſt be of opinion that the change of affection from Roſaline to Juliet is judiciously omitted, as it certainly ſerved no purpoſe but throwing an imputation upon Romeo's conſtancy, which tainted, muſt make him leſs the object of approbation and pity ; there is a moſt commendable prudent paternal tendernels in the expreſſions of Lawrence.

Benvolio and Mercutio appear, ſtill upon the hunt for Romeo, when the latter indulges his odd humours in as odd expreſſions ; his picture of Tibalt, who appears a man of mere fire and quarrel, ſeems

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not to bear a just resemblance ; bullies are for the most part cowards, but very seldom coxcombs ; comparing Romeo to a dried herring wanting its roe is a very low pun, and most pitiful quibbling conceit ; the scene with nurse and her simpleton attendant, is an extraordinary jumble of matter contemptibly ludicrous ; her message concerning Juliet has relation to the plot, but we wish it had been delivered in a more suitable manner, than by this comic ambassadress.

As if what we complain of was not more than sufficiently farcical, stage policy, to please the upper regions, generally presents Peter as bearing an enormous fan before his mistress ; skipping also and grinning like a baboon ; the beating which he gets for not resenting Mercutio's raillery, is a very mean, pantomimical, yet sure motive of laughter.

The impatience expressed by Juliet to hear the consequence of her message is expressed in lines charmingly poetical, without any violence to nature or strain of imagination ; and the nurse's behaviour in what follows natural but we wish she had not mentioned Romeo's *climbing a bird's nest* soon, nor that Juliet must, *bear the burden soon at night*.

In the next scene, where Juliet should have been allowed more time to appear, we find Fryar Lawrence has agreed to marry the young couple, and seems tenderly interested, but drops a very ungenerous insinuation when he concludes the act thus

— by your leaves you shall not stay alone,

Till holy church incorporates two in one.

Which conveys an idea of suspicion without any cause

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cause, for the lovers don't hint at retirement, but seem impatient for his benediction.

At the beginning of the third act we meet Mercutio again fraught with quaintness and quibble; his quarrel with Tibalt is such as might be expected from such blades, and taking Romeo's quarrel upon himself shews something of generosity; after receiving his death wound he utters a strange incoherent rhapsody, and so much preserves uniformity that his death commonly proves a very laughable incident: it is reported as an expression of Shakespeare's that he was obliged to kill Mercutio in the third act, to save himself; whatever he may have thought of the character or whatever has been thought since, if he never had been brought to light in this play, though a fine effort of genius would have been waved, propriety must have been much better preserved; it may be said less spirit would have been the consequence, we can't grant this, but Shakespeare's muse on such a subject could never have wanted more interesting matter.

Romeo's engagement with Tibalt shews great sensibility of friendship; we have heard him bear reflections, and of a severe nature vented against himself with philosophic resolution, but, roused by Mercutio's death, he takes revenge which occasions consequences of a very serious nature, whence the plot takes an important turn.

I remember to have heard an anecdote relative to the part of Tibalt, which, though trifling, I cannot omit; an itinerant barn-spouting hero, who had shipped too much beer aboard, performing it, forgot that he was to be killed; and thereupon fought

Romeo

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Romeo furiously for near ten minutes, nor would give up the contest till his lady cried out with tremendous voice from behind—Dennis, Dennis,—curse the fellow why don't you die,—her tongue, to him the emblem of thunder laid him flat immediately ; on coming off he was saluted with many reproaches for having forgot himself ; forgot myself, no, says he, I knew what I was about, and considered that Tibalt was a stout young fellow who would take a great deal of killing. To say truth the remark was not amiss ; for we may suppose, as he is drawn, Tibalt himself seems to think so.

After a series of scuffling the prince presents himself—indeed such a prince was never seen ; a justice of peace or a high constable to interfere where riots happen in the street is well enough, but for a sovereign, however petty, to appear so often upon such occasions is a strange prostitution of dignity—besides in the first scene, where no mischief is done, he threatens their lives upon any future breach of the peace ; yet in this, where two have lost their lives one of them his own kinsman, he good naturedly talks of fines for punishment—we apprehend so much tilting and the purport of this scene would have been much better in relation than action, Benvolio's account, though fine at present, would have had more merit if otherwise introduced—and the play would have been freed from a monstrous incumbrance of multiplied battles.

Juliet's soliloquy beginning “ gallop apace ” is a little in the extravagant style, but her situation and violent affection somewhat apologize for her flights ; nurse's entrance gives an alarming turn of passion,  
and

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and pity puts on her plaintive countenance for the young lady's painful situation ; this scene is wrought up with most masterly judgment—Juliet's supposition that Romeo's dead, is fine, then hearing that a kinsman is killed by her husband, and that in consequence he is banished--her charging Romeo with a savage spirit, and curbing nurse for casting reproach on him, though she herself has done it, are circumstances happily imagined ; and nothing can exceed the climax of impassioned expression in which Juliet descants upon her misfortune ; the gleam of comfort given in expectation of seeing her husband, concludes the scene well, and unbends the sympathetic feelings. good acting most unavoidably raise in an audience.

Romeo's scene with his ghostly father is an effort of genius equal to any degree of praise, and affords powerful expression a very copious opportunity of displaying itself, so as to work irresistably on the human heart ; the Fryar's prudent advice is well contrasted to the distressed lover's frantic ravings ; and his whole behaviour shows active, cordial goodness of heart.

The garden scene, for that between Capulet and Paris contains nothing but appointment of Juliet's marriage-day with the latter, is poetical and pretty, but as we apprehend, cut rather too short in representation ; on account perhaps of relieving the performers ; which is a point should always be consulted yet not so far as to omit any beauties that may please and ornament ; the alternate desires and fears of Romeo's staying are natural effects of wishing, and intimidated affection.

The



The following interview between Juliet and her parents places her in a very compassionate situation ; while Capulet exerts a degree of parental authority, too common we fear, which reflects no great credit upon his head or heart—Juliet's appeal to nurse as her sole remaining friend is pathetically pretty, but the unfeeling wretch's reply detestable.

What passes between Juliet and the Fryar at the beginning of the fourth act is expressive of affecting solemnity ; a crisis of the utmost importance is arrived ; grief assails her on one side and apprehension on the other, while weeping love casts tear-filled eyes alternately on both ; in this perplexity her application to the Fryar is very natural, nor can we blame, in her circumstances, those expressions of despair she lets fall ; however we think some arguments against the very idea of suicide would have fallen suitably and with force from her holy, tender-hearted confessor ; what he proposes of having her buried alive, to escape Paris is as wild and romantic a device as ever entered into any drama, it might do in a novel, but in a representation of nature, is no way justifiable ; however we are apt to forgive even absurdity, when it contributes to such an affecting catastrophe.

We cannot help thinking that all through this act Juliet's entrances and exits are crowded upon one another too much ; there are but three lines spoken between her leaving the Fryar's cell and appearing in her father's house ; the soliloquy she speaks previous to drinking the contents of her phial, is beautiful

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tiful beyond description ; terror and pity are alternately called upon in a most forceable manner.

In the next scene Capulet not only appears a mere old wife, but also blunders strangely ; the curfew-bell is an English institution by William the conqueror ; therefore improper for an Italian to mention ; besides that bell rings at eight in the evening, yet he speaks of three o'clock in the morning, and the second cock ; this might be easily rectified by saying the *matin* bell : Nurse's remarks before she attempts to wake Juliet are contemptible, at such a crisis ; and commonly make an audience laugh when they should cry—what the parents and the Friar say, after the supposed death is discovered, may pass without the censure of flatness, but merits no degree of praise ; it deserves note, that from what Capulet here says, great preparations have been made for the wedding ; though in the third act he declared it should be private, on account of his kinsman Tibalt's recent death.

Though not absolutely essential, nothing could be better devised than a funeral procession, to render this play thoroughly popular ; as it is certain that three-fourths of every audience are more capable of enjoying sound and shew, than solid sense and poetical imagination ; stage-pageantry cannot be very pleasing at any time to judicious taste, but, if at all commendable, it is upon this occasion.—The dirge as it stands at present we diffidently conceive liable to some objections.—In the first chorus, “ dismal  
“ mean,” favours much of the ballad stile ; in the succeeding air, comparing Juliet's eyes to

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*breaking* day, is but paying an awkward compliment of brightness, and makes her, like the morn-  
 grey-eyed. In the third air, “look down below” is a tautologous mode of expression, though somewhat countenanced by custom; for it is impossible to look down, without looking below; or to look up without looking above.

Romeo pleasing himself with satisfactory dreams is very natural, and a good preparation for that material change of feeling, which Balthazar’s heart-rending intelligence occasions.—The transition to astonishment of grief is amazingly fine; and his dismissal of the melancholly messenger by broken sentences, very natural.—Nothing was ever depicted better in the whole scope of poetical painting, than the apothecary and his shop; yet we must think Romeo’s recollection too coolly minute for a person in his distressed state of mind; what passes between him and the apothecary contains some useful, pathetic reflections.—What occurs between the friars John and Lawrence, is merely to acquaint the audience that a letter to Romeo of Juliet’s situation has miscarried.—We do not perceive any particular material use in bringing Paris to the monument, unless to sacrifice him in view of the audience, without having committed any crime to merit death; considered as a rival, he is so unknown to himself, and seems to have been sincere in his regard by visiting the grave of his intended bride.

Romeo’s speech upon approaching the monument, has much tenderness, assumed policy, and real fire; the brief, yet cordial farewell he takes of

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a faithful domestic; we have always considered as truly affecting.

Though Paris's appearance gives room for some good acting, we apprehend the scene would have been more uniformly solemn without him; discovering Juliet in her inanimate state, by breaking open the tomb, catches the eyes, and Romeo's reflections previous to drinking the poison, arrests the hearts of spectators; nature is brought to her most critical feelings at the moment Juliet awakes, and her husband's affectionate transports, forgetting what he has done, fills the audience with a most cordial sympathy of satisfaction, which is soon dashed in both by the poison's operating.—Romeo's distraction and her tenderness are so excellently wrought up, that we cannot suppose any heart so obdurate as not to be penetrated.—Her behaviour after his death, catching as it were his frenzy, and passing from grief to distraction, is a masterly variation in Juliet; what follows her paying the debt of nature, is judiciously contracted into a narrow compass; indeed we will venture to affirm, that no play ever received greater advantage from alteration than this tragedy, especially in the last act; bringing Juliet to life before Romeo dies is undoubtedly a change of infinite merit.

The whole dying scene does Mr. Garrick great credit, as being worthy the matchless author he has furnished it to, and we must venture to affirm, that his prejudice in favour, even of Shakespeare's faults, was the only reason why he did not retrench

and add more, which in particular places he ought certainly to have done. *Romeo and Juliet.*

The plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is romantic and irregular ; the characters oddly conceived and strangely jumbled ; the scenes very unequal in matter—some extremely insignificant, others enchantingly beautiful ; the unities are violently, yet not offensively broken, and the catastrophe, which hangs in the balance of suspense, as long as it should remain doubtful, is equal, if not superior, to any in the English drama, as it now stands ; in respect of moral, some very instructive lessons may be drawn from this piece, first from the lovers, that disobedience in children, or doing what they know is totally against parental inclinations brings a train of perplexities, and produces the most fatal consequences.—Parents may learn that family quarrels are not only unsocially absurd, but pregnant with misery to them and their offspring ; they may also perceive, that compelling youth in the article of marriage is an unnatural, dangerous exertion of authority ; and duellists may infer from *Tibalt's* fall, that the sword of fate hangs suspended by a cobweb-thread over a turbulent disposition.

The hero of this piece is vested with very warm passions, with much love, and what in that case may well be expected, little prudence ; he fixes his affections upon a particular object, and determines to have her at any rate ; the two valuable qualifications of courage and friendship he seems happily possessed of, but, upon the whole, shews rather an amiable than a great mind ; ardent in affection, vehe-

*Romeo and Juliet.*

vehement in rage, poignant in grief; thus equipped, and so circumstanced as he is, no wonder he affords capital talents a fine opportunity of displaying themselves; and a character upon the stage was never supported with more luxuriant merit than this by Mess. GARRICK and BARRY, or BARRY and GARRICK; for when those inimitable performers contested it sixteen or seventeen years since, it was extremely difficult to say who should stand first; we shall offer a comparison upon strict impartiality, and leave decision to the unprejudiced reader.

As to figure, though there is no necessity for a lover being tall, yet we apprehend Mr. BARRY had a peculiar advantage in this point; his amorous harmony of features, melting eyes, and unequalled plaintiveness of voice, seemed to promise every thing we could wish, and yet the superior grace of Mr. Garrick's attitudes, the vivacity of his countenance, and the fire of his expression, shewed there were many essential beauties in which his great competitor might be excelled: those scenes in which they most evidently rose above each other, are as follow—Mr. BARRY the Garden scene of the second act—Mr. GARRICK the friar scene in the third—Mr. BARRY the garden scene in the fourth—Mr. GARRICK in the first scene, description of the Apothecary, &c. fifth act—Mr. BARRY first part of the tomb scene, and Mr. GARRICK from where the poison operates to the end.

Having seen this play three times at each house, during the contention, and having held the critical scale in as just an equilibrium as possible, by not only  
my

my own feelings but those of the audience in general, I perceived that Mr. GARRICK commanded most applause—Mr. BARRY most tears: desirous of tracing this difference to its source; I found that as dry sorrow drinks our blood, so astonishment checks our tears; that by a kind of electrical merit Mr. GARRICK struck all hearts with a degree of inexpressible feeling, and bore conception so far beyond her usual sphere that softer sensations lay hid in wonder.

After two such truly capital performers we can scarce mention any other adventurer with patience; however, to spectators who never had seen them, Messrs. POWELL and ROSS might have given considerable satisfaction; their figures and voices suited well, but powers, countenances, and judgment to execute the most interesting scenes, were greatly wanting; Mr. SMITH, at present, bustles through the part with most inexpressive monotony at Covent-garden, and Mr. CAUTHERLY, without one requisite whatever of a principal performer, hobbles through it at Drury-lane; such an attempt is hardly to be conceived under the disadvantage of awkward deportment, limbs void of symmetry, action without meaning, voice without power, and features of most defective expression.

Mercutio never was nor never will be in better hands than Mr. WOODWARD's: Grimace and attitude, which so often diminish that gentleman's merit in other characters, are here of singular advantage, and the peculiarity of stile is admirably set forth by his peculiarity of expression; especially in  
the

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the capital speech relative to Queen Mab—notwithstanding Mr. MACKLIN was extremely well received, yet we cannot apprehend him in any shape qualified for the part ; a saturnine cast of countenance, sententious utterance, hollow toned voice, and heaviness of deportment, ill suited the whimsical Mercutio ; they might have done for what Otway has strangely metamorphosed him to, a mere cynic ; but tended to mar Shakespeare's intention ; however the author's sense was critically preserved in this, as well as all other characters by the theatrical nestor ; Mr. OBRIEN undoubtedly stood second, and the late Mr. PALMER was not without considerable merit : as to Mr. DODD we conceive him totally inadequate.

Mr. HAVARD rendered the friar extremely respectable, nor was Mr. RIDOUT far behind ; the former had more of characteristic placidity, the latter shewed more necessary weight of expression, Mr. HULL, whose propriety of speaking is at all times unquestionable, wants something of solemnity, not through defect of judgment or knowledge of nature, but a limitation of powers, which often check, in that gentleman, very eminent degrees of capital merit--Mr. LOVE--why have I occasion to mention such a murderer of blank verse, such a cofiac of tragedy—who bolts from a sonorous, rumbling, untuneable throat, the smooth, philosophic, generous sentiments of the friar in a mode exactly resembling the harmonious notes of a Newgate turnkey brow-beating unhappy prisoners ; we must however allow him the merit of a figure and countenance very well adapted--Mr.

BAN-



BANNISTER would do the play credit in this part ; indeed too much as it is now patched together.

Capulet had great justice done him by Messrs. SPARKS and BERRY, but is at present wretchedly off, whether we view him in that most tragical of all tragedians Mr. GIBSON, or the less offensive though water-gruel, Mr. BURTON—Benvolio suffered no damage from Mr. MOZEEN, though a very poor creature, but makes a better figure represented by Mr. PACKER ; as to that smirking self-important figure of an actor, Mr. DAVIS, who speaks as he walks, by a kind of instinct, and whom to mention is a waste of words, we wonder how even consummate ignorance with its constant companion could make him think of the stage ; or how any manager could ever use him in any other light than as a dumb eunuch in some of the Turkish plays--the other male characters in this piece we presume not worthy remark.

Juliet, bating too quick a susceptibility of love, is a most amiable lady ; she is tender, affectionate and constant ; possessed of liberal sentiments and delicate feelings ; rather romantic in some notions, but justifiably so from age and situation of mind ; sensible of filial duty, yet not firm enough in opposing it to passion ; her circumstances are deeply affecting and her catastrophe spiritedly affectionate, though as an act of suicide not very moral.

The competition between Mrs. CIBBER and Mrs. BELLAMY, who had both great merit in this character, seemed nearly to admit the same state of comparison as we have adopted for the contending

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heroes ; one excelled in amorous rapture, the other called every power of distress and despair to her aid ; Mrs. BELLAMY was an object of love, Mrs. CIBBER of admiration ; Mrs. BELLAMY's execution was more natural, Mrs. CIBBER's more forceable ; in the former there were traces of nonage ; in the latter too much of the woman.

Lady Capulet is no body, yet we once saw Mrs. PRITCHARD make her respectable ; mistress nurse, to whom we have objected, as a character inconsistent with tragedy, though highly finished from nature ; was most admirably represented by Mrs. MACKLIN, and we think her petulant impertinence is very well supported by Mrs. PITT ; upon the whole, this play is in a truly deplorable state of action at present in both houses ; and as, sixteen years ago, it was hard to say which company excelled most, the contention now seems to be, who are most contemptible.

Romeo and Juliet, though it exhibits none of the towering flights of genius, yet has many poetical beauties, expressed in smooth, nervous, agreeable versification ; and takes, in several places, tender possession of the passions ; it conveys very instructive admonitions, rises by just degrees to a striking conclusion, and must be allowed the candid praise of great merit, whether seen in public or perused in private.

## THE PROVOK'D HUSBAND.

A COMEDY.

Altered from VANBURGH by CIBBER.

THE Laureat, in his preface to this play, has taken considerable pains to do Sir John justice, by attributing the plan and most of the characters originally to him; however, a comparison between the PROVOK'D HUSBAND and Vanburgh's *Journey to London* will prove, that Cibber shewed great judgment and taste in the use of those materials which fortunately fell into his hands.

Though soliloquy is perhaps not the most commendable opening of a play, yet what Lord Townley offers at the beginning of this comedy, lets an audience well into the grounds of that uneasiness which sits heavy on his mind; the alarm he expresses at the danger his wife's reputation is in from her course of life, conveys a very instructive intimation to ladies in the gay world; and his chusing calm measures first to effect a reformation, shews a generous, prudent, tender cast of mind. —The scene with lady Townly exhibits much spirited gentility, the debate is carried on with great good manners on both sides, and a happy preservation of temper is maintained; for though his lordship warms a little, yet it is like a man of sense and rank; his mode of presenting the bill is delicate, and her manner of receiving it pleasantly  
whim-

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whimsical, as is indeed all she says through the remainder of the scene.

The short conversation between lord Townly and lady Grace is well conducted, and mention of Manly falls in aptly, of whom both give a good preparative character; I cannot, however, help being of opinion, that this gentleman rather seems too forward in advising rigid treatment, when lord Townly asks his advice; nevertheless, it occasions a sensible and instructive altercation between him and lady Grace, who argues against her own opinion, that she may come more effectually at his.—This scene takes a very agreeable turn, where Sir Francis Wronghead and his family are mentioned, of whom Manly gives a satirical and laughable account, shewing that he has a generous concern for their welfare, though he cannot avoid despising their folly.

If introducing such a person as John Moody into the presence of a nobleman and his sister can be justified, it may be truly said, that he gives great life to the scene, both from peculiarity of dialect and sentiment; as to the propriety of his appearance, we cannot think there is any breach of decorum; Lord Townly being possessed of a sensible affability, and having his curiosity raised by Manly's picture of the Wronghead family, might very well wave general distinctions in favour of honest John; who seems one of those unpolished, natural productions well worth investigation; if quality, which is too often the case, never stoops to a view of the lower ranks of life, but, like a lion, with

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supercilious abstraction, stalks only in its own circle, it must be very deficient in a most essential branch of knowledge.—Human nature is a volume of great variety, and he who studies it most, is most likely to be practically wise ; wherefore we heartily join with lady Grace, in “ loving nature “ let her dress be never so homely.”

Moody's familiar salutation of Manly, his intimation that his lady is in great good-humour from a free circulation of cash ; his account of the equipage ; the disposition of the younger children at Joan Growse's ; the misfortune of the coach, its contents of live lumber within, and non-essential lumber without ; the cargo of provisions, the succession of cross events, and the superstitious stress he lays on Childermas-day, are ludicrous to the highest degree, and as highly a finished piece of dramatic painting, as we have ever met with ; nor can any thing be more in character than where John gives himself such superiority over his master, as a shrewd and resolute husband ; indeed every line of this scene shews a rich vein of uniform humour.

After John's departure, the other characters are called off in an easy, commendable manner, by lady Grace's proposition of cards, which occurs from the discourse without any appearance of design.—Manly's short soliloquy contains some delicate remarks, and any where but concluding an act of a comedy, we should say the following lines had merit ; but rhyme on the stage is certainly abominable, except in prologues and epilogues.

Would

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Would women regulate like her their lives,

What halcyon days were in the gift of wives!

Vain rovers then would envy what they hate,

And only fools would mock the married life.

One of those worthy gentlemen, “whose occasional chariots,” according to the count’s own phrase, “roll upon the four aces,” is presented to us at the beginning of the second act, with an old lady who lets lodgings; the sharper, like all of his kind, from a duke to a link-boy, seems bent upon his own emolument at any rate; from his recommending Sir Francis’s family to lodgings calculated for that purpose, and his conversation with Mrs. Motherly, a very instructive lesson may be drawn, of the caution which should be observed with respect to placing confidence of a serious nature in persons who are only externally known to us; the Count’s intrigue with Myrtille is mentioned with a proper degree of impatience by her aunt, but if she had left out, or softened the following remark, it would have been better: when the Count says he will marry her neice, the reply runs thus,—“Very likely!—If you would not do it when she was a maid; your stomach is not so sharp set now, I presume.” The scheme struck out between these worthy personages is infamously politic, and I believe entirely consistent with a depravation of nature too frequent in life.—Basset’s short scene with Myrtille only confirms her imprudent conduct, and conveys rather gross ideas.—Her soliloquy contains truth, but not very proper to be told upon a stage.

Lady

Lady Wronghead's ignorant affectation of politeness is extremely well described in her first appearance ; and Sir Francis's rusticated observations upon introducing his son and daughter are an excellent preparation for a more intimate acquaintance with his character ; nor are the young squire and his sister less successfully delineated in what they say.—The unpolished roughness of the boy, countenanced through sympathy by his father ; and the pert, pettled forwardness of the girl, equally supported by the mother, exhibit a most diverting picture of parents foolishly indulgent, and children consequently absurd.

Manly's scene with Sir Francis is pregnant with genuine humour, and shews the baronet in a very entertaining view of stupid self-sufficiency ; his scheme of repairing his fortune by parliamentary connections, both justifies his title to the name of Wronghead, and gives a very keen stroke of oblique satire to that abominable practice of prostituting the legislative capacity to mercenary private views ; it is impossible for any thing to be better applied, or if rightly taken, more useful than the ridicule here thrown in a masterly manner upon both the knaves and fools of policy ; Manly's observations are all poignant without the least degree of superfluity, and lead Sir Francis into a whimsical, involuntary explanation of his designs ; his treatment of Ballet shews the gentleman and man of penetration ; while the gambler's unmeaning familiarity exhibits contrasted an empty, impertinent coxcomb.—Agreeable, however, to those superficial

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perfidious notions of gentility, formed by her shallow ladyship.—His conscious feeling of Manly's suspicion is very natural to an unprincipled rascal, and his retreat well-timed.

Those remarks made upon Manly by Miss and her mama are extremely suitable to weak females, who too often mistake plain-dealing for rudeness and ill humour; her ladyship's contempt of pecuniary expectations is also very consistent with a vain heart, elevated by visionary greatness, and her intention of throwing a rub in the way of Manly's marriage with lady Grace, manifests a mischievous bent, which littleness of mind is ever prone to. Dick's impatient call of appetite, the introduction of a full tankard, the consequent remarks, and John Mocdy's account of the misfortune their coach has met with, all happily concur to give this scene peculiar spirit.—But we wish John had not retained the carter's expression of “kissing,” &c.—The young squire's advice of bringing him before the parliament, is an admirable sting to the perversion of privilege.

Lord Townly and lady Grace begin the third act with some just remarks on fashionable excesses; from which their conversation, by an easy transition, turns upon Manly, when we meet with the effect of lady Wronghead's policy in a letter concerning that gentleman; lady Grace's communication of it to her brother is commendable, and his slowness to entertain a bad opinion without better grounds, added to his remark, that “unknown friends for the  
“ most



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 “most part prove secret enemies,” shews not only goodness of heart, but a knowledge of life also: the sequent interview between lady Grace and Manly is a piece of colloquial delicacy much to be admired; the explanation which the lady is in want of, rises upon her by very just degrees; the gallant justifies himself upon the principles of conscious innocence, which occasions an eclaircissement that agreeably embarrasses his mistress.—Her soliloquy after he goes off, contains sentiments worthy of virtuous sensibility.

Lord and lady Townly are well introduced by Trusty's account of them; they are both warmed by difference of opinion, and support their several arguments with characteristic spirit; she takes the lead in justifying her own dissipated life, and he very pathetically refutes her flimsy assertions, which gives rise to a serious turn of repartee; it appears, greatly to his lordship's credit, that neither the prejudice of his own circumstances, nor the solitary life he leads, weighs so much with him as a jealous apprehension of his lady's reputation; feeling strongly, as we may suppose, Cæsar's excellent maxim, that a wife should not even be suspected; that critical point of resentment to which the altercation rises, parting from her, carries him off the stage with respect, and leaves her in a kind of maze, but insensibility coming to her assistance, soon banishes useful reflection.

Lady Grace's appearance gives the fine lady a fresh opportunity of indulging her flow of spirits, which

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which she does in a vein of great pleasantry, by describing what she ironically calls the comforts of matrimony ; her pictures of life, and raillery of lady Grace's grave turn, are as entertaining effusions of a volatile imagination, as any our English drama affords ; and instruction is very well mingled with mirth in the prudent remarks delivered by the single lady to the married one.

Lord Townly, calmed from the occasional impetuosity we saw him touched with lately, appears in conference with his friend ; after a full and satisfactory explanation of lady Wronghead's mean device to prejudice Manly's character ; his Lordship assures that gentleman of his sister's affectionate esteem, and ratifies Manly's wishes with his own warm approbation.

There is something very generous, after such designed injury upon so tender a point, in Manly's resolution of saving the Wronghead family from ruin, even against their own inclinations—there is also a turn of considerable natural beauty at the conclusion of this scene, where lord Townly adverts to his own situation, and mentions Manly's prospect of superior happiness ; we think the act would have ended better without the couplet, which is tagged to it, though pretty enough—for the subject and sentiment are compleated with these words--“ how much  
“ the choice of temper is preferable to beauty.”

Mrs. Motherly and her niece informs us at the beginning of the fourth act, that worthy Count Basset has palmed a forged note of five hundred

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pounds upon them, the detection of which has occasioned the latter to let Manly into the plan that is laid against Sir Francis: what follows between Mirtila and the young Squire, is commonly omitted in representation, not we apprehend through a deficiency of merit, but to curtail the piece which certainly exceeds usual, and desirable bounds.

Sir Francis, filled with fresh importance from having been at St. Stephen's chapel; displays his consequence, perseverance and patriotism, in very diverting colours to Mrs. Motherly, who in the true stile of such obliging ladies, echoes every thing the baronet advances with most courtly admiration; Manly's entrance gives rise to a scene of infinite merit—a scene we could wish read every morning after prayers in the house of commons; though if it had as slight an effect as the devotion has, it may as well be let alone; it is impossible to describe a picture more strongly satirical than Sir Francis's interview with the ministers; chimerical hopes of preferment, from a squeeze by the hand, and to a member of such importance, who scarce knew, like many others, what side he voted on, are subject both for laughter and pity—a man wading beyond his depth not able to swim, and catching at twigs for support, is highly emblematic of Sir Francis, whose ignorance lays a snare to entrap himself.

The ladies and their gallant attendant count Basset, change the conversation to more detached matters; his intruding himself a second time upon Manly, who in a former scene treated him with contempt, shows

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shows palpably the servile coxcomb : Sir Francis's blundering misconception, especially respecting the sharper's courage, is admirably rallied by Manly ; Miss breaks out, with an excellent specimen of her city improvement, in the rhapsodical journal of proceedings, which she repeats ; Sir Francis's remark on Jenny's snappish behaviour to her mama—"there's your fine growing spirit for you, now take it down an you can," is a very just reproof to the ridiculous indulgence which has encouraged it ; the jealousy conceived against the daughter, shows her ladyship to be vicious as well as vain and silly—her laying hold of the promise, Sir Francis fancies he has got of a thousand a year, is very natural ; and produces a whimsical altercation, concerning the expences she has already run to ; Squire Richard's constant attention to eating, is characteristic and seems an inheritance from his wife father : we apprehend the following speech of the baronet's, upon his lady's proposing to buy some lace as fine as a cobweb, is an excellent stroke of political satire, and forced feeling : "Very fine, here I mun. fast, till I am almost famished for the good of my country, while madam is laying me out one hundred pounds a day, in lace as fine as a cobweb, for the honour of my family ! ods flesh, things had need go well at this rate."

The conclusive scene of this act, relates to Bassett's plot of securing Miss Jenny, to which the young lady herself seems most forwardly consenting—Mirrilla who has hitherto appeared in a light of

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pity, stands here an object of censure; but we must consider what she says, as calculated to draw her deceiver more deeply into the snare laid for him; what he says of wanting to be busy with her again, and her reply, that he will soon have one to find him sufficient employment, are sentiments not strictly delicate.

The Count's dissertation in soliloquy, upon assumed rank and sharpening principles, is admirable; we heartily wish what follows, was conspicuously hung up, in every capital gaming house throughout the kingdom—"Since our modern men of quality, are  
 "grown wise enough to be sharpeners; I think sharpeners are fools that don't take up the airs of men of  
 "quality."

The conversation which passes between Manly and lady Grace, at the beginning of the fifth act, gives us a good and necessary idea, of the interesting crisis his lady's conduct has brought things to in lord Townly's family; and their mutual desire of mitigating matters, furnishes a favourable picture of their friendly feelings.

Sir Francis's scene very judiciously shows a sense of error, urging its way upon his dull comprehension, and Manly's laying hold of the opportunity to point out his frightful situation in its real colours, shews good sense, and a generous mind—the poor well-meaning baronet, is involved in such a heap of dilemma's, that even the laughter which his ignorant confusion raises, must be mingled with some touches of concern; the means of his extrication  
 are

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are very artfully left in suspense at the end of the scene.

What passes between lady Townly and Trusty at the toilet, manifests the very essence of fashionable insensibility, a vacant head, and a callous heart—the description of what passed the night before is inimitable—taking the money from Poundage, shews a dishonest meanness which an infatuation to gaming, and a want of money will subject the highest, as well as lowest classes of life to ; it points out too, most satirically, the light in which tradesmen, and their circumstances are held in, by many of the gay world, who, being unprincipled themselves, think none of inferior rank in life have any right to, or occasion for punctual integrity.

The squabble between Poundage and the mercer, is most happily imagined, for bringing lord Townly on with the true dignity of an honourable nobleman ; which is far above a right honourable knave ; and an injured husband ; one provocation is excellently grafted upon another, to justify the violent agitation he appears in ; and his first reproach to the lady, strikes home at one mainpoint of disgrace, her dissipated folly brings on him ; his arguments are keen, yet consistent with decorum, and spirited without being outrageous ; while her replies, consisting of faint sallies of false wit, evidently show the badness of her cause, and give his lordship such openings for conviction, as afford reason, triumphant admission to bear down all her principles, but some embers of pride, which light into a short flame.

The

The crisis to which matters are brought when Manly and lady Grace appear alarms attention, and even throws some gleams of pity on the character of her infatuated ladyship; here the pathetic truly rises upon us, and while we tremble for the unhappy wife, we must applaud and sympathize with the determined husband, who paints the guilt, and pronounces sentence with all the tender firmness of a just and humane judge.

Lady Townly's feelings of remorse advance upon us in a pleasing, because an unexpected manner, and so much as we have blamed her errors, we are also prepared to receive her sensible recantation, which works that happy, agreeable effect upon his lordship it must do upon every generous mind; as indiscretion is the highest crime chargeable against her, the arguments of exculpation she offers are very admissible, and the effect of reconciliation is, I presume, to the wish of every auditor; in short, this turn of affairs, so gradually, and with such probability brought about, is far superior to Sir John Vanburgh's original suggestion of turning the lady out of doors.—The husband's authority is well maintained as the piece now stands, without any exertion of hardening severity, which may startle, but generally renders vice more obstinate.

Though the first part of the masquerade scene is, for sake of reducing the play to more bearable compass, usually omitted, yet it contains many excellent strokes of satire; what follows deserves particular attention and praise; in respect of those  
most

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most irrational and prodigal assemblies, lady Grace, sensibly observes,—“ Of all public diversions, I  
“ am amazed that this, which is so very expensive,  
“ and has so little to shew for it, can draw so much  
“ company together ;” to which lord Townly replies,—“ Oh, if it was not expensive, the better  
“ would not come into it ; and because money can  
“ purchase a Ticket, the common people scorn to  
“ be left out of it.”

Basset's choice of the masquerade for perpetrating his base designs, is not only natural to such a character, but also points out the danger of such a rendezvous, where vice or villainy may play their game under cover ; Manly's scheme of friendly detection is judiciously laid, the Wronghead family are well rescued, and strict poetical justice is done by obliging the Thaxter to marry one he has debauched, and would have imposed on an unsuspecting country lad.

The last scene, which is indeed but merely a conclusion, contains nothing more than a more formal exchange of matrimonial engagements between lady Grace and Manly ; as it was necessary to introduce the serious characters once more, we apprehend those lines which Lady Townly speaks at the end of their reconciliation scene, would have been much better reserved to the last ; indeed those rhymes which at present conclude the piece, are only an enlargement of the same thought.

This



This comedy, though not strictly conformable to the nicest rules of time and place, is nevertheless sufficiently regular; the scenes are well arranged, the serious and ludicrous happily mingled; the plot well digested, and the catastrophe much to be admired; the language of the polite characters is easy and nervous, of the lower ones humorous and spirited: the sentiments are adequate and instructive, seldom trespassing upon delicacy, and the moral is a most excellent one, shewing how follies of a different nature involve domestic concerns in different perplexities.

Lord Townly is a character of very amiable qualifications, sensible, polite, generous, tender and resolute, preferring indulgence, till he finds pernicious effects arising from it; his provocations are interesting and often repeated, yet all borne with patience, till the honour and dignity of a husband seem too much endangered, and every trace of discretion, on the female side, vanishes.

From this view it is easy to perceive, that his lordship cannot be well represented by the requisites of mediocrity; from a great variety of performers we have seen, Mr. Ross must be selected, as manifesting much superiority in this character; his figure, deportment, and expression, are happily suited: in the scenes of least importance, he shews polished ease, in those of consequence, pathetic feeling and spirited resentment; he remonstrates, reproves, chastises and forgives with dignity.—Mr. BARRY is not without considerable merit, but as freedom, either in action or expression, never appeared

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peared about this gentleman in comedy, he cannot safely become a competitor with one possessed of both ; where tears are mingled with embraces, he must be allowed to stand foremost.—Mr. RYAN received and deserved much praise, but he made lamentable use of the sing-song manner, and tragedized a great part of it abominably ; Mr. SHERRIDAN was as sententious pedantic as any supercilious fellow of a college in Christendom, unvarying and insipid through the whole ; Mr. Mossop haughty as a bawhaw, vulgar as a stage-coachman, boisterous as a tavern-keeper, and awkward as a country dancing-master ; pumping up every sentence from the bottom of the stomach ; stalking backward and forward, like a Jack-tar on the quarter-deck, and clenching his fists, as if lady Townly was every moment to feel the effects of them.—Mr. POWELL had sensibility, and was not void of ease ; but he wanted much of the nobleman, and fell very short of the character, except in the last scene ; Mr. HOLLAND was a perfect type of prim Stiff, the mercer from Ludgate-hill, both in utterance and appearance ; we never wish to see such a pasteboard peer again ; Mr. SMITH has freedom and elegance ; but a most lamentable sameness of expression hangs intolerably heavy on the ears of an audience in his performance of this part ; in the essential of dignity he labours under a similar defect with Mr. POWELL.

Manly appears possessed of a sound understanding, is friendly, constant and discerning, sarcastical and rather rigid in his opinions : careful of his

own principles, and cautious of other peoples; Mr. SPARKS, whose figure and voice were both unfavourable to him for such a part, had nevertheless a manner so significant that we have been at a loss ever to find his equal; in those scenes where Sir Francis is made his butt, he threw out his insinuations with such forceable meaning, that while spectators laughed *at* one, they could not avoid smiling *with* the other; in the third act scene where lady Grace shews the letter she has received to his disadvantage, he supported a degree of genteel delicacy very little to be expected from his general mode of performance; and indeed superior to any other person we have seen.

Mess. CLARKE and PACKER wanting essential characteristic shrewdness and cynical pleasantry, only reach that insipid medium which just avoids censure, yet never can reach praise; Mr. REDDISH would certainly do either this part or lord Townly much better than they stand at present in either house.

Sir Francis Wronghead is an admirable portrait of false consequence, ignorant self-sufficiency and undiscerning good-nature; a tame husband, a foolish parent and a credulous friend; possessed of a genteel independency, yet vainly grasping at imaginary promotion, to the great prejudice of his real circumstances. — Mr. MACKLIN, beyond all doubt, filled the author's ideas of this part, and conveyed them to the audience admirably; consequential stupidity sat well painted in his countenance, and wrought laughable effects without the paltry resource of grimace; where he affected to be very wise, a laborious, emphatic flyness marked

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the endeavour humorously ; while the puzzles between political and domestic concerns occasioned much food for merriment.

Mr. YATES pursued the same track, but with much fainter execution ; in him there was a kind of unaffecting petitness which much reduced the sterling value of propriety.—Mr. ARTHUR moved in a similar line of direction, but still further on the decline.—Mr. SHUTER, forgetting every trace of character, burlesques it with ten thousand unmeaning transitions of countenance, and as many ill-applied breaks of voice ; Mr. LOVE is as insipid as the last mentioned gentleman is wanton ; the former shews an uncultivated luxuriance of humour ; the latter an abominable narrowness of conception, united to a matchless dryness of utterance.

One general deficiency, which all the performers we have mentioned, labour under in this part, is making very imperfect attempts at the Yorkshire dialect ; from which, for the most part, they are as different as if they were speaking the Irish brogue.

Count Basset, a superficial, forward, gambling, fashionable rascal, possessed of cunning enough to form the knave, but void of judgment to hide it ; gaping like a hungry pike for prey, and snapping at every thing till at length he hooks himself ; pert without wit, and shewy without elegance ; Mr. WOODWARD used to do him strict justice, nay, indeed, make more of him than could be expected ; Mr. DYER and Mr. DODD represent him without leaving any material wish of criticism unsatisfied.

Squire Richard is an ill-educated, headstrong, brainless boy, taking advantage of the indulgence which has spoiled him, and following his own wild inclinations, without asking why or wherefore; he cannot complain of his intimacy with Mr. HAMILTON at Covent-garden—but is much better in possession of Mr. WILLIAM PALMER at Drury-lane, who possesses considerably more of the natural vis comica, in such a cast, than any other performer on either stage.

John Moody, a very natural, well drawn rustic; not without sense, yet possessing less than he imagines; a kind of humourist, fond of his own jokes, which he passes without reserve, from a freedom allowed him by his master; his bluntness is pleasing, and his caricature painting, shews masterly though unpolished satire; Mr. DUNSTALL hits off the manner and appearance of this character extremely well, but dialect is wanting in all the John Moody's, as well as Sir Francis's we have seen; Mr. SPARKS makes an Hibernian, and Mr. BURTON, nothing at all of him.

Lady Townly is drawn a female of peculiar spirit, possessing good qualities, which however are all swallowed up in a vortex of fashionable follies; yet not absolutely vicious, though verging close upon vice; a laughable yet melancholy; an entertaining though a pitiable object; mistaking elegance and vivacity for more valuable qualifications; despising any concession to the authority of a husband, yet a perfect slave to her own capricious inclinations—Mrs. WOFFINGTON had a most suitable appearance, and mode of expression; but rather indulged too much coquettish pertness in the latter,

*Provok'd Husband.*

latter, and somewhat of affectation in the former; for which reason we must prefer Mrs. PRITCHARD, as preserving the true woman of fashion much better; both of these ladies, however, were remarkably deficient in the tender part of the reconciliation scene; Mrs. CIBBER and Mrs. BELLAMY, each made romantic attempts upon her ladyship, being most insipidly unvariable till the fifth act, where indeed they had both merit—Mrs. CLIVE gave criticism an idea, that lord Townly had married his cook-maid, vulgar in the polite scenes, and dissonant in the pathetic one; Mrs. YATES is a mere fifth act lady; Mrs. ABINGTON all but the fifth; and Mrs. BARRY more consistent through the whole than any one we have mentioned.

Lady Grace appears a most amiable and pleasing contrast to her volatile sister; possessed of reserve without prudery, and solid sense without formality; willing to partake reasonable pleasures, despising extravagant, pernicious and irrational ones; the delicate ease and modest sensibility of this character, were never better represented than by Mrs. ELMY, whose merit seemed almost totally confined to her, and Selima in Tamerlane; Mrs. BULKLEY's very amiable appearance, easy deportment, and unaffected delivery of her ladyship's instructive sentiments, have given us, and we doubt not the public, very singular satisfaction; as to all others within our knowledge, silence is the greatest favour we can shew.

Lady Wronghead is a bounce-about, clumsy imitator of polite life, without a single requisite for that

*Provok'd Husband.*

sphere, ignorant to a degree, yet assuming knowledge superior to her important lord and master ; vain, positive, and not of very rigid virtue ; an impertinent wife, a gossiping companion, and a foolish mother—this odd compound never appeared more diverting, than in the person and manner of Mrs. MACKLIN, who exhibited petulant bustling affectation, with infinite humour — Mrs. CLIVE looked and spoke many of the passages, particularly those where contempt is thrown upon Sir Francis, with a very eminent degree of merit, in which she is closely traced by Mrs. GREEN ; nor does Mrs. PITT fall far behind ; as to Mrs. HOPKINS, she wants both spirit and humour.

Miss Jenny is a very natural sprout from the old stock already described ; talkative, pert, silly ; fond of herself and credulous to flattery ; a most excellent object for any smooth-tongued coxcomical, fortune-hunting blade to make a prey of ; with just wit enough to play unbecomingly on the sufferance of her father, and folly enough to ruin herself ; this vacant Hoyden, who certainly should have spoke Yorkshire, as well as her brother, sits with a very pleasant portion of easy humour upon Miss POPE ; Miss MINORS, since Mrs. WALKER, was happy in this, as well as the whole girlish cast ; but for Miss WARD ! ———we heartily wish she was well provided for off the stage ; why such languid dawnings of merit, especially in the female sex, should be plunged into so precarious and difficult a state of life, is not easy to be accounted for ; especially where there is a parent, who knowing the advantages, sees also, perhaps feels, the reverse.

To

*Provok'd Husband.*

TO Mrs. PRITCHARD's great praise be it spoken, she never gave her children encouragement to a theatrical station, though she had reached eminence so conspicuously herself, and supported it so well to the last, that like an evening sun, her setting, though not so resplendent, was full as agreeable as her meridian rays of excellence: Mrs. PALMER's own strong inclination for the drama overcame, not at all unhappily, her mother's prudent prejudice.

This Comedy, if not absolutely first, yields precedence to very few on the English stage, whether we consider its language, characters, humour, spirit or moral; and however Mr. POPE, who never could write a play himself, and therefore envied CIBBER, might anatomize that gentleman; we very much doubt whether any play he ever wrote, deplumed of fancy and harmonious numbers, contains more useful instruction, than this play which the Laureat, with so much taste and judgment, fitted for the theatre; upon the whole, we are bold to recommend the *Provok'd Husband*, as a very entertaining, valuable composition, both in representation and perusal.



## C Y R U S.

A TRAGEDY by Mr. HOOLE.

**T**HIS piece is the offspring of a virgin *modern* muse: the word modern is introduced to apologize *previously* for any deficiency in the nobler flights of genius which may appear. Public taste has been impregnated with such Gallic frigidity for twenty years past, that the glow of a warm imagination would be rejected as too powerful; wherefore most, if not all the tragedies, within the date mentioned, have been, as Aaron Hill emphatically observes, elaborate escapes from genius; cold, creeping tales, dragging a plot unaffectingly along, through five tedious sleep-inspiring acts: mere correctness is the poor equivalent for that noble enthusiasm which Shakspeare in particular, and some other dramatic authors, treated their sympathizing audiences with, and at present offer to those who are not embarrassed with the enervating false delicacy of criticism—yet hold: let us not even seem to hint that the play now under notice comes under such a charge, but candidly examine, and impartially decide.

Mr. Hoole does not wish to deny some obligations to that great Italian dramatist Metastasio, how he has availed himself of such an original, is not within our plan; since we only profess examining and illustrating pieces as they appear, unless where  
one

**CYRUS.**  
 One is professedly called an alteration of another—  
 Our criticisms are meant to be as plain and useful as  
 possible; our desire being much more bent upon shew-  
 ing a knowledge of nature, and an intention of pro-  
 moting social welfare, than pedantically to display  
 learning in multiplied conjectures, upon immaterial  
 passages, which from being temporary, become  
 obscure.

CYRUS opens with Mandane, daughter of Asty-  
 ages; and Aspasia, daughter of Harpagus; the for-  
 mer, who lost a son, and thought him murdered  
 twenty years ago, mentions, that she expects within  
 the day to see her child; her impatience at his deli-  
 berate approach is well expressed, and paints a mo-  
 ther's feelings, so situated, in just colours—from  
 what passes we find, that Astyages, his grandfather,  
 who had devoted this Cyrus to death, while an in-  
 fant, now seems to countenance his public appearance:  
 the old monarch's determining to sacrifice the young  
 prince, even before his birth, because of a dream  
 which portended his usurpation of the kingdom,  
 shews him ridiculously superstitious, and unpardon-  
 ably cruel.

In the first scene we also learn, that Cambyfes was  
 banished to prevent Mandane's having any more chil-  
 dren; however, we think Aspasia's mentioning what  
 the princess had known so very long, and ruminated  
 on so much, is merely making her a tool for opening  
 the plot; we are told too, that Mandane, though  
 her son counts twenty, is herself but thirty-two: this  
 may please a capital actress, as few ladies like to ac-

knowledge even that age, till a dozen or fourteen years older ; but is at any rate a very trifling circumstance to mention. - Aspasia also tells Mandane another circumstance already well known to her, and much better mentioned afterwards ; indeed it is some introduction to Harpagus, but we wish the plot did not open so mechanically.

By Harpagus it appears, that Cyrus is arrived upon the borders of the kingdom, but must not pass them till Aftyages's permission is signified ; this very justly stimulates maternal impatience, and occasions Mandane, as it is improper for her to appear in person, to send Aspasia for intelligence of who the prince resembles ; if, however, she had only mentioned a likeness of his father, without remembering herself, the stroke would have been more delicately natural—besides the choice of her messenger is not, we apprehend, quite justifiable ; as things are circumstanced, Harpagus would certainly have been much fitter than his daughter : however, he stays to give the princess some gleams of double joy, the return of her husband, as well as son, which he only hints ; and for what reason such obscurity is assumed, we cannot perceive, unless the statesman supposes Mandane incapable of keeping a secret, however important to herself ; or thinks happiness better administered by halves : the lady nevertheless is satisfied with the bare suggestion, nor asks once after probability, tho' Harpagus assigns no reason for his mysterious reserve.

Cyrus.

The statesman in his soliloquy intimates, that revenge for a murdered son enflames his breast, and that he wears an outside show of loyalty to make vengeance more secure. We could have wished that the unessential obsolete Scotticism *ken*, though admitted by some leading authors, had not been used in the last line : to imitate the beauties of capital writers is very commendable, but peculiarities are much better left to themselves.

We find from what Cyrus mentions at his entrance, that Mithranes, his supposed father, has made him acquainted with his real origin ; here a question obviously arises, why the old man should so soon disclose this secret, which it seems so necessary to keep ; since we cannot perceive that communicating it tends at all to forward the prince's happiness, nay rather unnecessarily changes his tranquil state to agitated perplexity ; a piece of useful information, however, accrues, which is that an impostor has usurped his name, and is ready to impose upon Astyages ; the dream of that old monarch is told by Cyrus to Mithranes, who knew it, and the consequences, before his birth ; this again seems strange fishing for revelation of a plot ; but what follows from where Mithranes takes up the story is most agreeably imagined, and suitably expressed ; the reception of Cyrus in his infant state, doomed to death by a savage parent, is pathetic, with beautiful simplicity ; and the prince's desire of paying some tributary drops to the memory of her, who adopted and took care of him as a son, speaks ten-

der laudable gratitude; the following part of this scene apologizes for a cautious, underhand method of working, by representing the affected contrition of Astyages suspicious, as a proof of which, his sacrificing Harpagus's son, upon supposition, that the father had saved Cyrus, is very judiciously offered; that speech wherein Cyrus seems eager to assert his right, shews a pleasing glow of spirited imagination, and the two last lines of it contain a sentiment of intrinsic merit.

That king will never guard his people's rights,  
Who wants the courage to assert his own.

This is a truth no man can deny; but least resolution should become rashness, and firmness obstinacy; a monarch ought, without the aid of fallacious courtiers, to know the exact barrier of separation between his own royal prerogative, and just popular privileges; filial duty seems to make a strong impression upon the young prince; an impatient, natural desire of seeing his unknown parents animates, but the cool advice of Mithranes checks him into a prudent and solemn promise to keep himself concealed under the name of Alcæus and his son, till fit occasion serves.

Where the old man touches upon reproof, and retracts, as being no longer in the character of a parent, with Cyrus's grateful, tender reply, are beautiful passages, as is also what follows;

—I will seek yon hallow'd roof, to raise  
Devotion's voice, and supplicate the gods  
To breathe a hero's spirit in this breast;

Cyrus.

That when the rip'ning hours shall bring to light  
The wish'd events of this auspicious day,  
My soul, enlarg'd to thoughts of conscious greatness,  
May hail with virtuous pride its birth to glory.

There is nothing more becoming of human nature than a just, reverential reliance on providence : *to begin every deed with heaven*, is worthy a sound understanding, a great mind, and a pious heart ; therefore the author who inculcates such a principle, without the least taint of enthusiasm ; who expresses it, with such a noble engaging simplicity as Mr. HOOLE has here done, commands the approbation of religion, morality and taste.

In the first speech of Harpagus, which acquaints us, that Astyages has sent him to enquire whether his grandson is arrived, we find an unpardonable grammatical slip.

To learn if Cyrus yet *approach* the borders *approach* plural, for *approaches* singular, we would gladly have presumed this an error of the press, but that the measure says otherwise ; wherefore we would recommend a change, suppose thus,

To learn if Cyrus *touches* yet the borders.

By this transposition and change of a word concord is preserved, without rendering the sense weaker, or the versification less harmonious.

From the conversation of Mithranes and Harpagus it appears, that Astyages bears his grandson no great good will, wherefore they determine that an impostor, who has usurped his name, shall fall in the way of those perils aimed at the real Cyrus ; the remark which Harpagus makes, that Media's heir

heir has been trained up to virtue in her <sup>Cyrus.</sup> safest school, an humble station, is pretty, but not defensible; because ~~the~~ virtues to adorn and support a throne require practical knowledge of life; he who knows not vice, nor has any opportunity of running into it, can possess but negative virtue at best; to be surrounded with temptation, yet still to soar above it, is the true purity of mind; a man who cannot get strong liquors claims no merit from sobriety, nor a female locked in a cloister from chastity; positive virtue is the child of free election, and, we apprehend, whatever pleasing pictures may be drawn from education totally abstracted, not one in a hundred of such characters would make a tolerable king, or even a useful member of society; speculation presents us with many ideas very pleasing, which practice immediately proves chimerical.

The approach of Cambyfes is again intimated, and they separate, lest from the king's jealous temper of mind some dangerous consequences might arise.

At the beginning of the second act, Mithranes expresses apprehensions for the absence of Cyrus, but is interrupted by the appearance of Cambyfes, whom he knows, though in disguise, yet does not seem to know; the stranger solicits guidance to Astarte's altar, where a grand annual sacrifice is that day to be held, which the old man promises, and mentions the expected appearance of Cyrus; some explanation seems approaching, when the sudden

ap-

*Cyrus.*

appearance of Aftyages makes it necessary for Cambyfes to retire.

The gloomy monarch sounds Mithranes's attachment on the principle of gratitude, which is acknowledged.—On mention of Cyrus's being preserved, Mithranes takes an extraordinary alarm; we say extraordinary, because there is no reason to imagine, from his cordial beginning, that Aftyages means any other than the fictitious character of Cyrus; indeed, he explains it immediately after; the listening of Cambyfes is a most pitiful condescension in any person of his rank; though misapprehension of Mithranes's accepting the murderous charge gives rise to somewhat interesting afterwards. The old man's mentioning Cyrus under the name of Alcæus, to perpetrate the monarch's command, is natural and politic.

The paternal impatience of Cambyfes which hurries him into the path of destruction on his son's account, is affectionate and noble; his appearance, and the danger consequent thereto, must agitate feeling spectators considerably; the circumstance of being taken prisoner affords him a good opportunity of shewing an invincible spirit, which causes a discovery of his real character, and furnishes him with reproaches of a very stinging nature against his cruel father-in-law.

As tyrannic guilt is ever trembling for its own safety, his threats of fatal nature might reasonably be expected, as also Cambyfes's contempt of them.—The charge of assassinating Cyrus is well levelled and strikes home also: the hint he throws out of  
ven-



vengeance hanging over the royal persecutor is <sup>Cyrus</sup> well imagined ; in short, both characters are excellently contrasted through the whole scene, confident innocence buoys up one, cumbrous guilt staggers the other.

Cambyfes departs with becoming spirit and moral dignity, leaving Aftyages pregnant with apprehension of lurking dangers.—In about fifteen lines after her husband's being carried off a prisoner, Mandane appears possessed of his disagreeable situation, which seems a violent breach of probability; being absent twenty years, she but thirteen when he was banished, how does the princess so suddenly, amidst such bustling circumstances, know him? Or, if he was pointed out to her as the person, is it possible to imagine but after so long an absence she would have forced an interview with him for an exchange of mutual tenderness ; as it is, we must suppose she has flown by him without taking the least notice ; a passage in the third act intimates she has not seen him ; if not, who has told her so suddenly of his situation ? The application to her father is of a very tender, persuasive nature, much in favour of capital performance, and conducted without running into bombastic extravagance, like that of Almeria in the Mourning Bride, when she pleads for Osmyr in the fourth act of that play.

Aftyages endeavours to alarm her feelings as a daughter, by acquainting her of the danger he apprehends surrounding him, yet grants security of life to the prisoner, in compliance with her tears ; but expresses a firm resolution of renewing his banishment.—The king no sooner departs than Cyrus

Cyrus.

appears, whom Mandane charges with breaking *importunely* on her grief—the word *importunely* we can by no means approve.

Cyrus's apology for so unceremonious an approach, is danger which courses him at the heels; dangers which arises, according to his own account, from self-defence; the sympathy of blood is hinted at in Mandane's first speech to the startled prince, who tells the circumstance of having rescued Aspasia from threatened violation, in terms becomingly modest; his narration is interrupted by the appearance of that lady, who urges information how he escaped with life from the danger her safety had involved him in.

Cyrus continues his tale with unadorned truth, and signifies, by a pleasing degree of natural painting, his antagonist's fall; the name of Mandane being mentioned, her son, as we might expect, is struck with amaze; at this very critical period an officer and guards are introduced, who give the scene quite another turn, by arresting the real Cyrus for having killed the usurper of his name. Those beams of pity which so lately lightened over Mandane's breast, now turn to the clouds of rage against him who appears the murderer of her son; Cyrus's solemn oath to Mithranes prevents his revealing himself; strong grief sways the mother, anxiety for her perturbation agitates the son, while Aspasia feels commendable, grateful concern for the unhappy situation of her deliverer.

Mandane, unable to express or bear her complicated miseries, hurries off with a speech expressing

some touches of frenzy; Aspasia's open, <sup>Cyrus.</sup>unreserved declaration of apprehension for Cyrus's safety, shews much generosity of temper, even admitting what she herself, after he is gone, hints at, love for his person; this lady's soliloquy concludes the second act, with tolerable spirit, but we must be of opinion, that the scene throughout is much more interesting from its circumstances than expression; the former have too great a similitude to Merope, and the latter falls far beneath the impassioned ideas of that tragedy; though Mr. Hook has happily avoided the strained, metaphorical versification, which incumbers Aaron Hill's brilliancy of imagination.

At the beginning of the third act, Mithranes, dreading Mandane's resentment against Cyrus as Alcæus, informs her of the secret so long kept from her; but at the same time warns against an indulgence of those transports which might discover it to her father; maternal joy for having found a son so long lost, and so lately to all appearance killed, is considerably damped by the situation of Cambyfes; from some breaks it appears, that Mithranes's prudent restriction is necessary to restrain Mandane; the heart violently agitated is ever prone inadvertently to disclose, what undisturbed caution would teach it to conceal; wherefore in such cases a friend's assistance becomes essential.

Astyages, true to his villainous principles, seems much pleased at, and grateful for, the death of him he supposes his grandson; this affords Mithranes a good opportunity to consult the safety of  
Cyrus,

*Cyrus.*

Cyrus, as Alcæus, which the king promises.—tyrant-like, in his soliloquy, he determines to sacrifice those who have contributed to his murderous purposes; hence arise fresh fears for the prince, on whom death seems to have conceived innumerable and almost unavoidable attacks.

Harpagus comes in seasonably to avert some impending ills from our hero, by shewing himself warm in his attachment to Astyages; Aspasia's supplication in favour of Alcæus works an alarm in her father's breast; introducing Cyrus to Astyages as a prisoner serves no purpose that we can perceive, except giving rise to a speech beautifully sensible: when Astyages makes a favourable remark on the prince's personal appearance, the statesman thus emphatically replies;

Appearance oft deceives; not always does  
The polish'd court display the fairest forms;  
And in the simple rustic's homely cell,  
Nature sometimes assumes a nameless grace,  
Which greatness cannot reach.

Harpagus's ungracious address to Cyrus, when he approaches the king, is also politically calculated to turn aside any suspicion of a disguised character; but why Astyages should call the son of Mithranes a person of lowly birth, or why Aspasia, in her soliloquy at the end of the second act, should hint pride's placing her above the offspring of a man who, it appears, had formerly been in favour at court, and obtained the rural retirement he wished from royal patronage, is hard to say: Mithranes, though a voluntary exile from grandeur and bust-

ling life, by no circumstance appears a mean <sup>Cyrus.</sup> character, therefore rusticity of birth should not be charged against Alcæus.

Harpagus's disguise of his real sentiments after Astyages goes off, even to Aspasia, shews cautious integrity; he hints prudently also his suspicion of love in the warmth of his daughter's solicitation, and warns her of a passion attended by unseen danger. — Upon her departure, we find the loyal statesman paying cordial homage to his prince; quere, whether freeing Cyrus from his chains does not break in upon the cautious plan he has before pursued; for suppose the king was to see or hear of such an indulgence shewn to a prisoner, even by the person who a few minutes before has rather behaved harshly to him, must it not wake slumbering suspicion to a state of dangerous activity?

Paying some tributary tears to the memory of his own son, and Cyrus's generous sympathy are pleasing transitions; when Harpagus represents private griefs as below the notice of royalty, he draws as fine a declaration of noble humanity from the prince as ever fell from any pen.

— Does royalty

Exempt the breast from every social tie

Which links mankind? Shall kings, my Harpagus,

Forget, that one inspiring breath to life awak'd

The prince and peasant? and shall he

The public voice proclaims his people's father,

Not feel those sorrows which his children feel?

The prince's concern for his father's imprisonment, and his mother's grief, is well adverted to, and occasions

Cyrus.

tions Harpagus to renew the charge of secrecy first given by Mithranes ; this creates a perplexity in the following scene with Mandane, where she owns him as her son, and he shuns her tender approaches, which terminates the act in a critical and interesting manner: however, we cannot help thinking Cyrus's behaviour to a tender mother, when it appears she has been informed of his identity ; a punctuality too rigid for nature and probability, his mysterious reserve naturally throws her into a state of dubitation bordering on amazement.

Act the fourth begins with Mandane alone—we have a strong objection to that passage in her soliloquy which stiles suspense, life's *deadliest calm* ; in the first place we know not any calm that can be deadly, unless the sleep of death be stiled one ; and what relation suspense has, either to *deadly* or *calm*, is not easy to perceive : suspense we apprehend to be an agitated state of thought possessing the mind, where reflection hangs in a medium between hope and fear ; if the former is confirmed, joy takes place of suspense—if the latter, despair may come, and that indeed deserves the epithet deadly ; but in each instance every idea of a *calm* vanishes, for pleasure is as tumultuous as grief.

That affectionate transport which a faithful couple, so long parted as Cambyfes and Mandane, might be supposed to feel, is interrupted by the former's supposing his son newly slain ; however, he is informed otherwise, and mutual satisfaction again displays pleasing beams. The following description of Cy-

rus

rus by his father, is as poetically expressed, <sup>Cyrus</sup> as it is fancifully conceived :

As I cross'd the wood,  
Where yon tall poplars shade the dimpled pool,  
I late beheld a youth, whose noble mien  
Attracted my regard ; I turn'd to gaze  
While with light steps he bounded o'er the turf,  
His auburn locks flow'd graceful down his back ;  
Quick was his piercing eye : his manly shoulders  
A spotted tyger's dreadful spoils adorn'd,  
Some gallant trophy of his sylvan wars.

The turn which ensues from Cambyzes's hearing that Mithranes has informed Mandane of her son's existence is truly fine, as thereby the plot gains an alarming intricacy ; having heard Mithranes promise the assassination of Cyrus to Astyages ; he very naturally supposes, that the old man, through ambitious views, wants to palm his own son upon a wishing, and therefore a credulous mother ; of this Mandane is the more readily convinced by reflecting upon the unintelligible behaviour of the young man in his late interview with her.

The resolution of Cambyzes to take revenge on his own son in the character of Alcæus, sets every tender fear of nature at work ; when Cyrus approaches—by the bye—he appears too quickly—his mother's change of looks very justly alarms him, and in his turn he solicits for an exchange of maternal and filial tenderness, which occasions a powerful conflict of passion in her breast ; but viewing him both in the light of an impostor and her son's murderer, she uses a kind of deceit, and for sake  
of

**Scene.**  
of a more secret conference, the prince appoints her at that very part of the wood where Cambyfes has fixed on to make him a sacrifice.—Mandane's soliloquy is in a disjointed stile, well suited to her situation; but how she should hint the grief of Alcæus's mother, on seeing him bathed in blood, we cannot reconcile, as the death of Barce, Mithrane's wife, he himself being well known at court, could scarce escape her knowledge.

Aspasia's mention of Alcæus, like water upon flames, makes Mandane's fury blaze the higher; and carries her off teeming with the bitterness of revenge.—What passes between Aspasia and Harpagus appears only calculated to give strong feeling a necessary pause: however, it is not without several pleasing sentiments, agreeably expressed; the lady's dutiful condescension to her kind father's cordial advice, even though that advice counteracts impassioned inclination, furnishes the idea of a most amiable mind.

Mandane, it appears, has sought out Mithranes, and for some time dissembles her rage, to make it burst forth with trebled fury, which naturally throws the guiltless old man into astonishment; nothing can be more strikingly imagined than the princess's mistaken triumph, in supposing she shall have son for son; Mithranes's distracted confusion to think the prince should be in such danger, and by a father's hand, fills the humane breast with terror; this whole scene is wrought up in a most masterly manner, and every speech, pathetic, supplicative re-  
mon-



monstrances on one side with furious, unbelieving obstinacy on the other, speaks most forceably to the heart, which must throb with terror and anxiety.

When Mithranes goes off, Mandane's mind is thrown into a very different state of convulsion, we have lately seen her filled with rage almost savage, but behold her now, on Harpagus's assurance that Alcæus is really Cyrus, plunged into the utmost poignancy, nay distraction of grief, which barely leaves her power to speak the place and impending mischief; this sends off Harpagus on the wings of loyalty for prevention; her soliloquy is beautifully wild, and we may venture to say, that no fourth act ever hung an audience more in suspense at its conclusion, than this does, which we deem a point of infinite merit; if there is any fault, it must be, that there is no increase of feeling left for the scenes which are to come.

The fifth act presents us at its commencement with Mandane wandering, she knows not whither, under the impulse of distracted agitation; to her Mithranes enters, after a fruitless search for Cyrus; the mention of whose name occasions an increase of his unhappy mother's frenzy; on the return of reason, she knows Mithranes, and sends him to Astarte's fountain; Cambyse's appearance with his sword bloody, strikes every tender idea with apprehension, that he has effected the destruction of his son; and totally overbears afflicted Mandane; Cyrus's entrance, however, gives a fresh turn, though nature still trembles for his danger from a  
mistaken

*Cyrus.*

mistaken father's rage: the lady's situation should certainly have claimed some assistance from her husband, previous to every other consideration; when unassisted revival enables her to speak, an eclairsissement ensues of a very tender and pleasing nature; yet in expression we rather deem it faint; the play should undoubtedly have been so planned as to have concluded here, yet we find a great deal of business to ensue; Astyages comes unawares upon Cambyfes and his daughter, the former of whom is again made prisoner; on being informed of a rebellious tumult by Harpagus, the king's rage threatens the late happy couple with death; but they are preserved by a lucky thought of the statesman.

Cyrus next appears meditating prettily on his change of fortune, and reveals himself to Aspasia; this whole scene must be deemed non-essential, and very flat after what has preceded; the prince's determination of assisting his endangered grandfather shews dutiful tenderness, and a very generous mind; Harpagus, after long smothering revenge for a murdered son, now openly attacks Astyages, and as the event shews they are reciprocally wounded; the royal monster dies, with some gleams of repentance, yet strangely languid when compared to his enormous guilt; Harpagus expires recommending his daughter to Cyrus: Cambyfes and Mandane now appear; it is to be lamented that, after all her sufferings, a father's death should render her happiness imperfect.

Aspasia's being totally unprovided for is a great imperfection; <sup>Cyrus</sup> Cyrus only recommends her coldly to his mother for comfort, though, in the preceding scene, when she mentions his exaltation, he replies,

Rise, fair Aspasia,  
And know, the daughter of my Harpagus,  
In her defence, may justly claim that life  
Her father's truth preserv'd.

Upon a general survey of this tragedy, we find the plot pleasingly intricate, agreeably regular, and pregnant with many affecting circumstances to the conclusion of the first scene of the fifth act; what follows is a mere sacrifice to partial justice, which, we apprehend, might have been effected with more brevity and merit by some very practicable transpositions of incidents.

The characters of this piece are in no respect striking; Astyages is a most unnatural tyrant, more known by what is spoken of him, than by any thing he says himself; he is hateful to the audience, without any acting merit to assist the performer; he is most insipidly vile, timorous, cruel and credulous.—Mr. CLARKE is much to be pitied when burdened with such an ungracious load; what can be done for the despicable monarch in action, he does, and certainly deserves the author's thanks.

Cambyfes is a very odd mixture of somebody and nobody—here—there—and no where; brought from his exile to do nothing—taken prisoner—set at liberty in a most unaccountable manner; taken

*from.*

prisoner again; enlarged again merely for a happy catastrophe; he seems to have some traces of a good husband and a good father, but no other marking qualification, whatever; nor has he above half a dozen speeches which deserve notice:—Mr. SMITH's performance gave him tolerable spirit, and struggled successfully with an inconvenient situation.

Cyrus is amiable, and utters many sentiments worthy a virtuous, well-cultivated mind; yet upon the whole we must deem him as unseasoned a hero as ever gave name to a dramatic piece; some interviews with his mother are, in respect of the unessential secrecy preserved, ridiculous; and throughout the piece, he seems too much an engine of the plot.—Mr. POWELL's pleasing appearance and suitable powers raised the prince far above that degree of mediocrity, in which the author has placed him; had there been more favourable opportunities for execution, we are persuaded, it would not have been wanting; but reaching even the languid term of praise, agreeable, was as much as any performer could hope to arrive at.

Mr. WROUGHTON has of late been most cruelly obtruded on the public in this part; cruelly for himself and the audience, since even those who force him to the undertaking must admit, that his abilities are as much beneath even the languid Cyrus, as Mr. POWELL's were beyond him; but it seems to be a received managerical maxim at present, to give the public neck-beef where they have a right to expect venison; no very grateful return for that amazing encouragement which is afforded.

Harpagus appears to be a statesman of com-<sup>Cyrus</sup> mendable principles; he feels just resentment for the murder of a son, yet suppresses his revenge till a regular train of events comes to place Cyrus on his grandfather's throne; his dissimulation with Astyages is very defensible, and his character equal throughout; his death is not quite consistent with poetical justice, but necessary; Mr. HULL, though better calculated for exhibiting amiable and tender feelings, than any which border upon gloomy and sanguinary designs, represents Harpagus with merit at least equal to any other male character in the piece.

Mithranes's loyal and parental attachment to Cyrus; his anxious concern for the prince's safety, and the evident pains he has taken to instil principles worthy that elevated station his royal pupil seems designed for, render him highly estimable; he is thrown into very interesting situations, and has a manifest advantage over every other character, except Mandane; it would be injustice not to allow Mr. BENSLEY considerable praise in the performance of this part; yet, we apprehend, the play would have been much better cast at first, if Mr. POWELL had done Mithranes, Mr. SMITH Cyrus, and Mr. BENSLEY Cambyses; it should at present undoubtedly stand thus; Mr. SMITH Cyrus, Mr. BENSLEY Cambyses, and Mr. HULL Mithranes—though, by the bye, so rich is Covent-garden in merit, we know not an apology for Harpagus, to supply such a change, except Mr. GIBSON, who might much more reasonably be  
trusted

*Cyrus.* trusted with the murder of such a part, than Siffredi and many others he stands in possession of; besides getting rid of Mr. WROUGHTON at any rate is much to be wished.

Conscious of Mrs. YATES's very forceable expression, the author has endeavoured, and not unhappily, to furnish her several opportunities of displaying capital talents; through every change of tenderness, rage, fear, affection and distraction, she shews powers which must work strong and natural feelings upon the audience; tears, apprehensions, and even a degree of astonishment wait on her Mandane; judicious transitions of voice, happy variations of countenance, and picturesque attitudes unite to make this the most finished piece of female action we remember to have seen, except Mrs. CIBBER's Alicia and Constance; indeed it is so much beyond what we behold at present in general, that it is not surprising to hear people say, instead of "We are going to see Cyrus," We are going to see Mrs. YATES.

Aspasia is a very inoffensive, though unnecessary young lady, very loving and very dutiful, introduced we know not why; disposed of at last we know not how; no abilities could make any thing of her in performance, therefore Mrs. MATTOCKS, whom we cannot admire in tragedy, is as sufferable as any one else,

The plot of Cyrus is in many places wrought up with pleasing perplexity, but falls into a patched-up catastrophe; the first, second and fifth acts are languid; the third and fourth striking and spirited; the language,

language, abating some few slips, chaste; the senti-<sup>Cyrm.</sup>ments just, though not very poetical, and the versification unaffected, but nerveless; in short, Mr. Hoole has successfully availed himself of a good original to fabricate a piece that acts prettily; without being in any shape great, it is in many respects pleasing.

The strong similarity to Merope and Douglas, with a comparison, lessen its merit; as it wants the sentimental, pathetic dignity of the former, and the pastoral, picturesque simplicity of the latter: public opinion has run much in favour of this piece in representation, and the managers have substantial reason to call it a good play; but we dare believe neither one side nor the other will con-  
 tend for much merit in perusal.



## THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.

A Comedy.

By Mess. GARRICK and COLMAN.

**W**E have either observed, or meant to observe, that spirit and propriety of character, vivacity of dialogue, wit, and variety of incidents, are the constituent parts of a good comedy; many of late have got into the stile of mere sentiment, and chit-chat picked up from novels, which they are vain and idle enough to suppose compleat dramas; if such authors are right, Ben Johnson, Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar and Cibber, were undoubtedly wrong; licentiousness, 'tis true, has disappeared, but in general it seems as if wit and pleasantry, who were too long united with so bad a companion, had followed their old ally; how far the child of poetical partnership now before us has fallen into or avoided the fashionable languor let candid consideration declare.

Fanny, merchant Sterling's youngest daughter, is acquainted by the maid Betty, at the opening of the play, that her husband is just come from London; as Fanny is fearful that any hint of her secret match with Lovewell should escape, she strives to check, but with little effect, the maid's babbling impatience, whose frequent mention of what she is desired to be so cautious of, sprinkles the scene with laughter; but we apprehend, however natural in private, the pregnant state of Fanny  
need



*Clandestine Marriage*

need not have been so much insisted on.—Love-  
well finding Fanny in tears, occasioned by her ap-  
prehensive situation, soothes her in terms becoming-  
ly tender.—She pressingly urges making their mar-  
riage public, which he objects to, both on account  
of her sister's approaching nuptials with Sir John  
Melville ; the mercenary, vain disposition of her fa-  
ther, and the ignorant ambition of her aunt Mrs.  
Heidelberg : however, he promises to make the  
discovery soon, and conceives favourable hopes  
from his affinity to lord Ogleby : this satisfies the  
lady, who, on going out, is met by her father.

The merchant charges Lovewell with following  
his daughter, and upon the young man's mention  
of himself as a husband for her, Sterling, citizen-  
like, hints a deficiency in pecuniary qualification ;  
Lovewell's arguments of persuasion are all an-  
swered and defeated, by his not having the recom-  
mendatory *stuff* ; Sterling's peculiarity through this  
scene is entertainingly expressed, and the confusion  
that Lovewell is thrown into by urging him to a  
promise of mentioning the matter no more, is very  
natural ; his escape from the dilemma is also well  
conceived in promising that things shall go no far-  
ther.

On being informed of lord Ogleby's speedy ap-  
proach, after some humorous remarks on the  
peer's letter, Sterling breaks out with purse-proud  
sufficiency respecting his own taste and ability for  
entertaining persons of the first rank ; ignorant  
ostentation is here shewn in glaring colours, and the  
whole scene is agreeably sustained ; the soliloquy  
of

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of Lovewell opens his design of making Sir John Melville a confidant; that through him Lord Ogleby's approbation and consent may be obtained.

The ensuing scene between Miss Sterling and Fanny, exhibits a strong contrast of disposition, the former shews coquettish extravagant vivacity; the latter modest sensibility; the ladies are supported in their different lights with considerable merit, and Miss Sterling's raillery of her grave sister, gives great spirit to the scene; her notions of gay life are very happily expressed, and one of her satirical strokes is excellent; speaking of her finery, she lets fall this tart and pleasant sarcasm, on the folly and profusion of licentious gallantry—"The jeweller says I shall set out with as many diamonds as any body in town, except Lady Brilliant, and Polly—what d'ye call it—Lord Squander's kept mistress."

Mrs. Heidelberg's entrance, produces a fresh vein of humour; her opiniated consequence, ignorant vulgarism of expression, and impertinent bustle, mark her character strongly; her abrupt behaviour to Fanny, and her partiality for Miss Sterling, shew further what we are to expect from the old lady; from their conversation, we may perceive that the favourite niece entertains some doubt of her lover, Sir John Melville, which Mrs. Heidelberg endeavours to set aside by interpreting his coldness polite delicacy; this occasions the young lady to give a pleasant sketch of Lord Ogleby's amorous tendency.

Sterling's anxiety about the elegance of his entertainment; his sister's instruction for polite beha-

## Clandestine Marriage.

viour, and Canton the Swiss domestic's appearance, all co-operate to end this act in an agreeable preparative manner for what is to come.

The second act opens in an apartment adjacent to Lord Ogleby's bed-chamber; Brush, the nobleman's valet, appears gallanting Sterling's chamber-maid, in the true strain of imitative quality; his coxcombry and the girl's coming simplicity are extremely well supported.

Nothing can be more happily imagined, or better conducted than the introduction of Lord Ogleby, whose figure and manners make irresistible appeals to laughter; nor is the Swiss sycophant Canton any way unequal to the ennobled oddity, his master; Canton's insinuation that both the Miss Sterlings seem attached to his Lordship, is not only a fine attack upon the peer's weak side, but works up Ogleby to a most ludicrous opinion of his influence amongst the ladies; the merchant's praise of the accommodation his house affords, and his intention of hurrying the feeble peer from one spot to another, for sake of viewing what he presumes tasteful improvements, keeps up the dialogue with much pleasantry.

Sir John Melville's entrance is only to draw Lovewell into a private conference, which might have been effected, as we apprehend, much better without necessitating the baronet to come upon such a trifling errand—Sterling's inadvertent attack upon Ogleby's constitution and appearance, shews plainly the forward, unreserved trader, who will speak his joke at any rate; a circumstance plainly irksome to his Lordship, though he seems to pass it off agreeably. The

*Clandestine Marriage.*

The ensuing unfinished scene between Sir John Melville and Lovewell, seems a mere excrescence, the lopping off which would make no gap nor any way mutilate the piece; in that between my lord, the merchant, Mrs. Heidelberg, and the two young ladies, we apprehend Sterling's clumsiness of taste is rather too much displayed; the humour seems to confess a strain upon that point, but takes an agreeable turn when his lordship's vanity interprets the present of a nosegay from Fanny as love, and that of another from Miss Sterling as jealousy; the silent situation of Sir John and Lovewell through so long a scene, might, and undoubtedly should have been avoided; for though Sir John's explanation affords some little grounds for action in Lovewell, when he finds the baronet's affection placed on his wife; yet the conversation is much too long for what it turns upon, and rather damps that spirit which happily enlivens most other parts of this piece.

Sir John's interview with Fanny, shews that gentleman in no favourable point of view, as thereby he discovers inconstancy to one sister, and rudeness to the other; this scene also is heavy, though the lady shews good sense and commendable feelings—Miss Sterling's appearance gives an enlivening turn; her resentment hurries off the false gallant in terms of natural confusion, and falls in heavy reproaches on her innocent sister, whose perplexed situation and delicate resignation, render her an amiable object of favour and pity with the audience; her soliloquy at the end of this act leaves matters in a state of tender suspense.

According to that excellent rule of variety, practised in a particular manner by Congreve, the introduction of new characters in each of the three first acts, we are presented with the lawyers who are to settle marriage contracts, &c. at the beginning of the third act of this piece, their scene is an extreme pleasant and severe satire upon those maggots of the law, as Farquhar emphatically styles them, who breed and live in the rotten parts of it—there is something peculiarly keen levelled against self-important old practitioners, who pretend not to know young ones, where Flower addresses Freeman, concerning the length of his practice at the bar: Sterling's consequential boasting of his wealth, and the serjeant's methodical particularity, concerning the marriage articles, are highly characteristic.

Sir John Melville's entrance, demanding a private audience of Sterling, sends off the lawyers, and brings on a conversation in which the baronet gradually discovers his affection for Fanny; a circumstance which naturally surprizes her father; however, by a proper application to his interested disposition, that is by abating thirty thousand pounds of the fortune proposed with Miss Sterling, he obtains the citizen's consent; this point is effected in a natural and laughable manner; Sir John appears to have no idea of delicacy where passion is concerned, nor the citizen of honesty, when gold preponderates the opposite scale; a doubt arises about Mrs. Heidelberg's consent, and the merchant appears anxious to keep the transaction a secret from her—it is impossible for any thing

*clandestine Marriage.*

thing to be more characteristic than Sterling's soliloquy, which ends with the following very sensible, a truly satirical remark, " Well, thus it is that  
" the children of citizens, who have acquired fortunes, prove persons of fashion; and thus it is  
" that persons of fashion, who have ruined their  
" fortunes, reduce the next generation to cits."

In the following scene we perceive, that Miss Sterling has fanned the flames of her aunt's passion, by relating the discovery she made of Sir John and her sister; the old lady's resentment breaks forth in a torrent of whimsical expressions; the baronet's appearance occasions the young lady to retire, when he is warmly reprehended by Mrs. Heidelberg for slighting her elder niece in favour of the younger; Sterling makes his appearance, and is thrown into a diverting state of confusion, by being charged with his giving consent to the affair just mentioned; this scene is executed with remarkable spirit, and Mrs. Heidelberg's declaration at going off, that she won't give the family a farthing, is a severe sting to the citizen, who appears quite subservient to his sister's influence from pecuniary considerations; which makes him paint the matter to Melville as of great consequence; who proposes to obtain lord Ogleby's interest in his favour; here the act concludes, leaving the audience again in a very agreeable state of dubitation.

Mrs. Heidelberg, Miss Sterling, and the merchant, open the fourth act with the old lady's declared intention of sending Fanny to town, which Sterling diffidently opposes, but is treated in a very  
cava-

cavalier manner by his purse-proud sister, which draws from him a soliloquy of merit concerning the tyranny of females, where they can safely usurp power; at the conclusion of it we find this just remark—"So absolute with her money!"—but "to say truth, nothing but money *can* make us "absolute—and so we must even make the best of "her."

Lord Ogleby and his Swiss confidant appear next conferring upon the circumstance of Fanny's being sent to town, which occasions his lordship to make some humorous remarks upon all the family but her, whom, as it appears, he thinks more than tolerable, supposing she has a tender for him; Canton's adulation and the peer's laughable vanity are most humorously displayed.

The following scene between Lovewell and his wife consists of a proposition from him to make lord Ogleby acquainted with their marriage, as the most probable method of removing their perplexity; his lordship appears, and the lady is left by her husband to open the affair.—For some time their conversation is all preparatory for the main point, and the amorous nobleman, from the lady's very natural confusion, draws some favourable conclusions concerning his influence upon her; the expressions he throws out aside shew a rich vein of humour; the mention of Sir John's addresses occasions a pleasing misconception, as Ogleby's folly causes him to think that the lady's dislike proceeds from an attachment to him.—Canton's interruptive entrance is very well conceived to divide the scene, which,

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which, we deem, to be highly and uniformly finished.

His lordship's soliloquy also is worthy of what precedes it.—In his conference with Sterling and Miss, the misconstruction is made excellent use of on both sides; particularly as appearances deceive one party, while vanity misleads the other from real truth; lord Ogleby's manner of opening his design of marrying Fanny to her father is executed with great judgement; and the following scene with Lovewell is a most interesting continuation of that misapprehension, which furnishes such entertaining materials to this act.

There is a very artful and regular climax of humour, which rises with every fresh character, and keeps the peer, for an usual length of dialogue, so far from palling that even at the end of the act, we wish for more of him; his triumph over Sir John's pretensions to Fanny gives a most agreeable variation of pleasantry, and we are doubtful if any dramatic character was ever better supported so long together.

The fifth act begins with Lovewell and Fanny at the crisis of their anxiety, dreading a discovery, which nevertheless it now appears absolutely necessary to make; by Mrs. Betty we are informed, with her usual circumlocution, that they are in danger from some eaves-droppers; her taking miff is very suitable to one whom confidence makes pert.

Fanny, upon returning from a look-out, requests Lovewell to retire, which he obligingly complies with; Miss Sterling, full of envious jealousy and suspicion,



suspicion, begins the next scene with her aunt, on whose affectionate feelings she works by an artful appearance of violent grief; it appears, that she supposes Sir John Melville to be in Fanny's chamber, lodged there with a design of running away with her next morning; the approach of Brush drives off these two ladies.

This gallant valet, elevated with liquor, pays addresses to the chambermaid, and speaking of the wine he has been drinking, throws out coxcomically this stroke of well-conceived satire, "I am a little electrified, that's the truth on't; I am not used to drink port, and your master's is so heady, that a pint of it oversets a claret-drinker."—His close attack upon the girl, and her apprehension of being detected, occasion some mention of Miss Sterling, of whom Mr. Brush expresses himself rather freely, and in her hearing, as she happens to be upon the listen; this, and his declaring an intention of entering Mrs. Heidelberg's apartment, if the chambermaid resists, bring that old lady and Miss Sterling forward, brimful of rage and reproaches; Brush however scampers off, and leaves his sweetheart to encounter them; supposing her in Fanny's plot, they brow-beat severely, and examine her strictly; however being totally ignorant of the matter, they only put her into an unavailing fright.

Mrs. Heidelberg goes off to rectify her head-dress, and leaves Miss Sterling on the watch, who seeing Betty come out of her sister's room, taxes her with having material secrets in her custody; Mr. Sterling and Mrs. Heidelberg enter at this point of time,

*Clandestine Marriage.*

time, the first enquiring why he is disturbed, and the last acquainting him with the supposed villainy of Sir John Melville's being in Fanny's bed-chamber : this alarms the father, who is not willing, however, to have it made a public matter, by awaking lord Ogleby and the whole family.

The citizen's design of making Sir John marry his youngest daughter privately in the morning, throws the eldest into so violent an agitation of spirits, that she and her aunt break out, in spite of his interposition ; their cries bring forth Canton and his lordship, the lawyers, &c. in very laughable appearances.

The ladies take great pains, on his lordship's cordial enquiry after Fanny's safety, to persuade him that she is on the point of running away with his nephew Sir John ; however the peer's opinion of her being attached inviolably to him bars all the passages of belief : his confidence even interferes so far as to call Fanny out of the chamber ; just as he mentions his nephew as the concealed party, Sir John comes on at the opposite side, which invalidates a main part of the charge.—Nothing can be more suitable than the lawyers making their remarks in terms of practice.

Betty now opens the door, and lets out her mistress in a great flutter of spirits, which operates so strongly as to occasion her fainting ; this incident draws Lovewell from his retreat, who, in the warmth of anxiety, avows his regard for her, and after some altercation, the marriage is declared : this strikes all with astonishment, and causes Ster-

ling to threaten them with being turned out of his house, from which rigid determination arises a most pleasing stroke of generosity in lord Ogleby's temper, which promises them an asylum with him : the plot thus wound up to a crisis of explanation, the young couple are made happy by the father's consent, the real good wishes of some, and the seeming forgiveness of all.

The language of this piece is spirited, and in general chaste, though not elegant ; the sentiments just without brilliance, the incidents well ranged, the plot pleasingly unfolded, judiciously conducted, and well wrought up to the catastrophe ; as to wit, it traces natural conversation of the present day so close, as not to have a spark throughout the five acts ; and for moral, it has not the shadow of one, which the authors seemed conscious of, when, instead of adverting to so essential a point, they adopted the pitiful, though classical, mode of conclusion by begging applause from the audience ; which is a little like Merry-Andrew's bidding *his* audience shout, when he has played tricks before them : in an epilogue, such a sugar-sop may be dropped to sweeten the acidity of critical opinion ; but at the end of a play, it must certainly be deemed a piece of poetical sycophantism.

Lord Ogleby, though pronounced a very near relation of lord Chalkstone, is most certainly as much an original, and as much a child of laughter, as any character on the stage—harmlessly vain, pleasantly odd, commendably generous ; a coxcomb not void of sense, a master full of whim, a lover  
full

*Clouds and Marriage.*

full of false fire, yet a valuable friend; possessed of delicate feelings and nice honour: the peculiarities of this difficult part are supported with eminent abilities by that most excellent comedian Mr. KING, who notwithstanding his chief praise derives from being a chaste delineator of nature, here strikes out in the water colour painting of life, a most beautiful and striking caricature, conceived with some degree of poetical extravagance, yet so meliorated by his execution, that thousands who have never seen such a human being as Lord Ogleby, must, amidst involuntary bursts of laughter, allow, nay wish there may be such a man, whose foibles are so inoffensive.

If Mr. KING shews more merit in any one passage than another, it is where Sterling says to the young couple "Lovewell, you shall leave my house; and, madam, you shall follow him;" to which the peer with infinite good nature replies, "and if they do, I shall receive them into mine."—Though it does not always follow that what an actor feels most he can express best; yet we may venture to say a kind of sympathetic unison gives this short sentence peculiar force and beauty in Mr. KING's utterance.

Sir John Melville is chief confusion-maker of the piece, of indifferent principles and insipid qualifications; ease and gentility of deportment, which are the only requisites necessary for this gentleman, were equally wanting in the late Mr. HOLLAND, and the present Mr. AICKIN: however, tolerable propriety is as much as this water-gruel baronet deserves, and so far he received no injury from these gentlemen.

Sterling is a well drawn uniform character, mounted upon the stilts of property, aiming at and boasting of taste he has not : grappling at pelf of which he has a superfluity ; selfish and positive, where he dare exercise authority ; ostentatious, methodical and ignorant ; thus compounded he gives considerable life to those scenes where he is concerned, when assisted by Mr. YATES's inimitable talents for such characters ; but in the hands of Mr. LOVE sinks beneath criticism, and seems only calculated to lull attention to sleep ; it is a great pity this monotonous gentleman rose any higher than Serjeant Flower ; the florid unvarying importance of physiognomy he commonly wears, being better adapted to a lumber headed lawyer, than any other character.

Lovewell engages an audience by his tender sentiments, and affectionate sincerity ; his situation affects, and his manners please us ; Mr. POWELL never made a more agreeable figure in comedy, nor perhaps so good a one as in this part, which being placed in a station of life that he himself had filled not long before ; and being happily suited not only to his external appearance, but his internal feelings also, he satisfied most agreeably every point of expectation ; even Mr. CAUTHERLY, though far beneath the original, is not an insufferable Lovewell.

The lawyers are drawn in a masterly manner, and for the reason assigned above, we think Mr. LOVE had merit in the Serjeant—would he had never been removed ; however, it must be allowed that Mr. BRANSBY is a worthy successor, as he supports at least the *weight* of the character with equal merit.

*Clandestine Marriage.*

Canton is an admirable delineation of a foreign sycophant playing upon a vain English nobleman; the picture is instructive, and held to view in a very just advantageous point of light by Mr. BADDELEY, who breaks expression well into the Swiss Dialect, and cringes through the part in a very characteristic manner.

Brush is an excellent contrast of the assuming English valet, and while in view, claims some notice—the late Mr. PALMER deserved and met more applause than could be expected to attend so short a character, where tipsey he was highly laughable; his successor and name-fake if not quite so pleasant; has nevertheless a considerable share of merit.

As Farquhar said in respect of Sir Harry Wildair, that when Mr. WILKS died or left the stage he might really go to the jubilee; so without exaggeration we may say that Mrs. Heidelberg was lost to the public when Mrs. CLIVE retired; the ignorant affectation, volubility of expression, and happy disposition of external appearance, she was so remarkable for, will render it difficult to find an equivalent; in many characters she proved herself mistress of a fund of laughter, but was in none more luxuriantly droll than in this, every line of the author was very becomingly enforced, and many passages were much improved by emphatic illustration, in such undertakings we have never seen her equal, and doubt if ever we may, Mrs. HOPKINS is scarce a shadow of her.

Miss Sterling, a character quite unfinished, says a good deal to very little purpose is eat up with ambition

*Claudine's Marriage.*  
 bition, and I am afraid, with envy: she seems to have no commendable principles about her, her first scene indeed exhibits a considerable share of harmless spirit though what follows rather speaks malevolence.

She is left at the catastrophe in a most undetermined, and we may add, notwithstanding her foibles, an unsatisfactory state; the authors have made something of her at first, to drop her into nothing at last; in this view, she must rather be a dead weight upon any performer; however, Miss POPE, surmounting disadvantages, renders the young lady rather more than tolerable.

Fanny has a manifest advantage of her sister in simplicity of manners, disinterestedness of affection, and delicacy of feeling; her situation also happily enforces the amiable parts of her character; Mrs. PALMER, the original in this part, spoke more both to the head and heart, than Mrs. BARDLEY either does or can do; some lucky hits, with a more pleasing figure, make her pass off upon general opinion as well as her predecessor, but where criticism interferes, we must think much more favourably of the past than the present.

Betty will never again be performed with merit equal to the lady, who with much justice declined the insertion of her name in the drama for so insignificant a character; a character far below her capabilities; almost as far as it is above Mrs. LOVE's execution, of whom it was literally cruel to make an actress—yet by some unaccountable fatality,

*Clandestine Marriage.*

talities, this unhappy lady is shov'd on for many things, which would have been much better in other hands, and could not be worse in any.—Why, why will managers so far mistake the judgment of an audience, as to venture the intrusion of such creatures as understand little, and express less.

The chambermaid, according to what is said of her, was as well figured and played as ever she will be, by Miss PLYMM.

To speak of the piece in a complicate view, it certainly has a great deal of acting merit—a thorough knowledge of life and character is essential to draw comic scenes successfully; of this the CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE is a pleasing proof; however, some of the scenes are heavy, and a few trifling; the dialogue is not so spirited and easy as Farquhar's, nor so luxuriant and nervous as Congreve's, yet agreeably disengaged; the satire well pointed, and the sentiments lively, though not generally instructive: if standing the test of closet criticism be the fairest and most estimable degree of merit, we must not venture to place this piece among the foremost; but in representation, we are willing to allow it every point of approbation, which the indulgent public has favoured it with, and much more than many others can claim, which possess those very requisites the CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE wants.



## THE FAIR PENITENT.

A TRAGEDY by Mr. ROWE.

**T**HIS dramatic composition was wrote at a time when genius received nourishment from the beams of royal favour, ere the muses of this isle were germanized into stone; and stands to this day in estimation at least equal to any except those of Shakespeare. It opens with Horatio and Altamont, two persons of rank in Genoa, from whom we learn, that it is the latter's bridal day; there appears to be strong links of friendship between these two characters, and that Sciolto, a nobleman, father to Altamont's bride, has shewn particular marks of favour to Horatio, on account of being Altamont's brother-in-law and friend; his attachment to Altamont arose from a peculiar mark of filial duty shewn by him to a dead father, in yielding himself to prison, that his father's corpse, which had been arrested by rigid creditors, might obtain the usual rites of burial.

Sciolto at his entrance expresses himself in terms suitable to the feelings of a tender parent, on the day which disposes of a favourite daughter according to his wishes, and as he imagines of her own; this scene is mere congratulation, except where Altamont mentions the coldness and concern of his bride; this the father naturally interprets to arise from the real or artificial coyness of her sex, and

con-

*Fair Penitent.*

conducts them off with some lines of poetical, yet, we think, exceptionable expression.

Lothario, a young lord of dissolute principles, with his confidante Rossano, appear next; from the expressions at first dropped by Lothario we find, there is a rooted enmity subsisting between him and Sciolto's connections, chiefly on account of Calista, of whose unfortunate credulity, and his own triumph over her virtue, he gives a most fanciful, but highly censurable description; vice is here adorned with irresistible charms to an unguarded mind, and therefore presented to public view in her most dangerous garb: reason and judgment commiserating the betrayed, must condemn the betrayer; yet we fear the luxuriance of fancy here works a quite contrary effect; less merit in the writing would have lessened the danger, either in perusal or representation; gross licentiousness disgusts, but the refined sort, like palatable poison, introduces destruction unperceived.

Lucilla appears on message from her mistress Calista, and addresses the gay deceiver in pathetic terms; his replies are much in character, and the scene has considerable spirit in action; but we doubt whether delicacy and just reserve are not too violently offended by the maid's proclaiming her mistress's situation before a third person: Horatio's unexpected approach shortens their conference, and in the hurry of retiring, Lothario drops the letter just received from Calista by her maid.—This the friend of Altamont takes up, and though good

manners would have taught him to decline perusal of it, as seeing the superscription—To Lothario—yet a curiosity stimulated by friendship occasions him to examine the contents, which afford a most alarming and painful discovery, not only of Calista's previous but subsequent guilt, by soliciting an interview with him who has undone her, even with a man who is known as the determined foe of Altamont.—The soliloquy occasioned by this fatal letter is well suited to a man in Horatio's critical and disagreeable situation; reflection seems more to embarrass him, and he is wrapped in the perplexity of thought when his wife appears.

Lavinia at her entrance makes a very natural enquiry, why Horatio has left even the marriage ceremony; for this no apology is offered, as we do not perceive a reason to suspect Calista before discovery of the letter just found, nor any other cause for absenting himself from the immediate celebration of his friend's nuptials; the resolution of not acquainting Altamont with the dreadful discovery is tender, generous, sensible and friendly.—Lavinia's concern at her husband's confused, unintelligible behaviour is prettily expressed, but we conceive an exception against the following passage; in the midst of sympathetic anxiety, which naturally speaks to the point at once, she utters the following superfluous simile;

—The sick man thus,

Acknowledging the summons of his fate,  
Lifts up his feeble hands and eyes for mercy,  
And with confusion thinks upon his audit.

Ho-

*Her Penitence.*

Horatio's reserve of a subject which seems to affect him so deeply, encreases the alarm which his wife has already taken, and occasions her to touch him on the tenderest points, of affection, which, however, only draws from him warm declarations of regard without coming to any point of explanation; these operate properly upon Lavinia's good sense, which declines farther enquiry, and change her request to his appearing amidst the jocund proceed-  
of the day; this produces from Horatio some fine reflections upon vicious and inconstant women, whom he contrasts delicately to his wife, with which the first act ends.

Calista, swelled with perturbed agitation of mind, begins the second act with refusal of comfort from Lucilla, who offers, but in vain, some cordial sensible advice; the wretched bride, prepossessed against her new husband, indulges the most gloomy ideas and expressions of discontent; her description of what she should deem an eligible abstraction from the world, is extremely picturesque, but too poetical; it breathes the air of romantic, rather than natural grief; the pride of heart, which had not power to check fatal delusion and the loss of virtue, yet soars above worldly censure, and urges her to entertain thoughts of death, rather than public shame; this, we believe, has been too often the case in reality, and is therefore a commendable picture held up to startle young minds from similar indiscretion; infatuation is admirably depicted in her resolution to see Lothario, though it forbids any

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 claim to the character of Penitent, and shews it is not so much a sense of guilt, as an impatience of being crossed in her wishes, that agitates her.—This is no doubt natural, but renders her much less an object of pity than real contrition would have done; female weakness, influenced by ill-grounded love, is finely and instructively described in this scene.

Upon Altamont's approach, Calista forms the resolution of guarding her real thoughts from discovery; the amorous bridegroom addresses her in terms of rapture, to which she makes a cold and dubious return; and even goes so far as to tell him their union is not founded on the principles of happiness; Sciolto, replete with parental joy, gives directions for every mark of festivity, and pronouncing an emphatic nuptial benediction, retires with all the characters, except Horatio, who in soliloquy canvasses again the subject which sits so heavy on his heart; he supposes and wishes the letter to be forged, but seems to draw very unfavourable conclusions from Calista's confused and gloomy deportment; this occasions him to throw out a general, and therefore illiberal reflection against the whole sex, adverting to the strained similitude of original sin in Eve.

Lothario now comes forward acquainting Rofano with his loss of the letter, which villain-like he does not regret, as it may be the means of infamy and wretchedness to the unhappy woman he has ruined, but as he wants to make it an instrument of his antipathy against Altamont,

Ho-

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Horatio here enters, as it appears, in search of Lothario; their encounter is natural, and their dispute is wrought up not only by just degrees, but in terms suitable to the dignity of those who are disputants; the cool determination of Altamont's friend, is beautifully contrasted to the petulant, ostentatious impatience of his antagonist; the one reasons like a man of sense and virtue, the other prevaricates like an unprincipled coxcomb; when the charge of forgery is brought home, which Lothario only answers in the doubtful stile, Horatio utters a most beautiful sarcasm against him and all other pernicious reptiles of his depraved nature, which we cannot avoid quoting;

Away—no woman could descend so low;  
A skipping, dancing, worthless tribe ye are,  
Fit only for yourselves: ye herd together,  
And when the circling glass warms your vain hearts,  
You talk of beauties which you never saw,  
And fancy raptures which you never knew.  
Legends of saints, who never yet had being,  
Or being, ne'er were saints, are not so false  
As the *fond* tales which you recount of love.

The word *fond* in the last line is not of very obvious meaning, unless to those who know, that in Yorkshire and some other parts of England, it implies silly; even in this sense, we think, either the epithet of *foul* or *base* tales would have suited premeditated scandal much better.

In the progress of this altercation, Horatio shews himself not only a man of real courage, but also the active, warm friend; nor does Lothario

short of commendable spirit, if exerted in a better <sup>Fair Penitence</sup> cause; we think the strength of Horatio's feelings rather hurry him to indiscretion, when he mentions the matter before a third person; the challenge is well given, though we disapprove Lothario's gross reflection which provokes a blow from his antagonist; there is much dignity and cool determination in Horatio's brief acceptance of the summons: The conclusive speech of this act, which conveys in some very beautiful lines excellent instruction to the fair sex, is, we apprehend, exceptionable; not only from being run so much into rhyme, but because it necessitates the speaker to step out of character, and address the audience, a circumstance by no means defensible.

At the beginning of the third act it appears, that Scioſto has discovered his daughter's fallen behaviour, and reproves it in terms of high displeasure; the simile which closes his first speech is strained, and, like most others in dramatic composition, superfluous; his threats are of a very serious nature, and occasion Calista to make some remarks upon the subordinate state of her sex, which her proud heart seems ill calculated to brook; Horatio approaches, and intimates how critical the subject he comes upon is, therefore resolves to enter upon it in the gentlest manner; whatever justice may appear in his design, we agree with Calista, that stealing upon her is a breach of decorum inconsistent with persons of rank.

Calista's dislike of Altamont is a very sufficient reason why she should hold his most intimate friend  
at

*And Penitent.*

at distance; her insinuation of this brings on the point in view; upon Horatio's delivering that excellent sentiment, "To be good is to be happy," and mentioning that "Guilt is the source of sorrow," the author has shewn himself well acquainted with conscious feelings by making the lady kindle at the word guilt; it being certain, that those who have done ill are most ready to catch at the imputation of it; Horatio seizes this opportunity to press the matter closer, which only serving more to inflame Calista's rage, he, at length, as a proof of his assertion shews her the letter to Lothario; unable to resist so palpable a conviction, she tries a very natural effort of female policy, which is by tearing the letter, to disarm him at least of positive proof.

At this critical crisis, while she is swelled with rage, and his friend covered with confusion, Altamont comes forward, with fresh declarations of love, but takes a natural alarm at seeing his bride and Horatio in such a situation; Calista here, by throwing inflammatory materials on the mind of her husband, and urging a quarrel of fatal nature between the friends, shews herself highly capable of plunging into one degree of iniquity to screen another, and that even a sacrifice of blood is not too much for her ill-founded pride; this we allow to be strictly in nature, but the grounds of an execrable character; at her departure she rages in some very poetical rhymes.

The following scene between the friends takes a turn which may be expected; the prejudiced bride-



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groom, who thinks the object of his wishes free from every criminal imputation, charges Horatio with ill behaviour, who to exculpate himself is betrayed into an explanation respecting Calista, rather blameable ; yet from a person in his agitation of spirits probable enough. Fired by the charge of guilt, levelled at her he loves, a charge merely supported by assertion ; Altamont indulges violent resentment, even so far as to throw off all traces of friendship ; we have another blow given in this scene ; as such a circumstance generally creates laughter, and is at any rate disgraceful to persons of rank, we wonder an author of Mr. Rowe's delicacy, could repeatedly introduce it.

Horatio's reluctance to endanger the life even of an ungrateful friend, and adverting to a likeness of his father, are proofs of a great and tender mind, which urged beyond all bearing, at length acts on the essential principle of self defence. Lavinia's seasonable interposition prevents fatal consequences, yet cannot sprinkle any drops of patience on Altamont's inflamed heart ; who behaves with almost as much brutal roughness to her as he has done with savage fury to his friend ; in short we must deem Altamont, through this whole scene, both a fool and a madman ; had Horatio been drawn with as little sense and tenderness, poor well-meaning Lavinia must have brought herself into a most painful situation ; however, the manly tenderness of her husband balms in some measure the stings a brother's unkindness has planted in her heart, and she returns it properly by an affectionate declaration of attachment ; in the last speech of the act, where, however, pleasing sentiments

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sentiments and nature are again injured by simile and rhyme ; though had the latter been avoided, the former might have passed without objection, may perhaps with some degree of praise.

A soliloquy begins the fourth act, wherein Altamont seems to stand self-convicted of folly in quarrelling with his friend for a woman, who repays his raptures with coldness and disdain ; upon his exit Lothario and Calista appear ; the gay gallant endeavouring to sooth his deceived and enraged mistress, who shews a just resentment against the falsehood which has plunged her into misery ; his upbraiding her with having married the man he hates, is an artful stroke of exculpation relative to himself, and stimulates her rage considerably : Altamont's appearance at this period is well contrived, and what Calista says previous to his coming in view brings him forward in a striking manner ; Lothario's fate is properly precipitated ; his dying words suit the tenor of his past conduct, and he expires in the same character he has maintained through life.

Calista's desperation at his fall, and the irresistible proof of her own guilt, is a natural effect of strong passions ; Altamont's immediate confession of forgiveness, shews him to have at least as much weakness as humanity ; the voice of Sciolto heard from without, strikes his daughter with a fresh degree of confusion ; upon the old man's entrance, the traces of blood alarm suspicion in him, which being confirmed by what Altamont replies, his fu-

ry breaking all ties of paternal tenderness aims at Calista's life, which is saved by her husband's humane interposition, even contrary to her strong persuasive supplications for death at a father's hand; Sciolto's start of phrenzy being passed off, he indulges reflection and reproach in a truly pathetic manner; the picture Calista gives of her own retirement, contrition, and mournful catastrophe is extremely affecting.

After she disappears, we are struck with the idea of some fatal resolution, and melted with the old man's tears; who, on hearing that Lothario's faction are assembled threatening ruin, seems pleased with an opportunity of carrying vengeance even among the friends of that young lord; after a soliloquy of Altamont's, which indeed means very little, Lavinia enters in confusion, and lets us know, that she has just been rescued from a mob, with whom her husband is still engaged at hazard of his life.

Horatio soon enters to dissipate her apprehensions; but treats Altamont with that just and firm contempt his behaviour in the former act merited; the sister pleads amiably for her brother, and the unhappy man makes very tender concessions.—

Horatio, we think, highly blameable, for so gross a reflection as “an infamous, believing British husband:” to taunt him with so cutting a misfortune is inhuman; and the stigma of *British* husbands, though perhaps proverbial amongst the Italians, is very illiberal; too much so to be adopted; Altamont is far too figurative in the speech which  
begins,

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begins, "I have wronged thee much," and Lavinia's carrying on the allusion with which it concludes, is an unpardonable trespass upon serious feelings.

Altamont's tears touch Horatio with sympathy, and it is to be wished, that they alone had wrought the desirable effect of tenderness ; as the pantomimical stroke of falling down is utterly contemptible ; and the two speeches occasioned by it, rather laughable : this whole scene is very inadequate to the rest of the play, and the characters are carried off with a jingling tag spoken by Lavinia, which has more sound than meaning.

Notwithstanding good language, striking characters, and a well conducted plot may disdain the adventitious assistance of processions, rooms hung with black, &c. we cannot help allowing that this latter decoration, with Lothario's body in view, gives a necessary solemnity to the fifth act, which Calista opens with a soliloquy of most masterly composition ; Sciolto's appearance at such a time of night, in such a place, and what he says, prepare us for a scene peculiarly interesting ; nor are our warmest expectations deceived in the progress of it ; the father and daughter now lulled from the turbulence of passion, mutually unflinch their hearts, and, if the phrase is allowable, let flow a spring-tide of sorrow.

Here, in spite of guilt, we must feel for the unhappy fair one, and sympathize with the hoary wretched sire. Who sees him lift up the dagger

with unresolved and trembling hand, but <sup>*Fair Penitent*</sup> shudders ? who hears his distraction at the thoughts of his daughter's tasting death, but feels pity vibrating in every nerve ? however, recommending self-destruction to his child, is equally unworthy the Christian, the parent, and the man.

Returning to the pleasure her infant years gave him, and his forgiveness of her, are circumstances thoroughly pathetic ; his parting carries the climax of tenderness as high as it can well go ; the succeeding scene between Altamont and Calista is extremely languid, and seems to have little else in view, than giving a fresh instance of that amorous weakness which so entirely rules the injured husband.

Horatio comes with the melancholy information of Sciolto's being mortally wounded ; which hurries Calista into the tremendous act of suicide ; an example Altamont seems inclined to follow, but for the prevention of his friend ; Calista lives to receive the blessing of her expiring father, which is extended also to Horatio and his son ; Calista makes some attonement to her husband with her last breath ; Altamont declares an indifference for life, and Horatio concludes the piece by rhiming forth an evident and very excellent moral.

The title of this tragedy has by many critics been deemed a misnomer ; for, say they, the lady's behaviour in no shape entitles her to the character of a Penitent ; this charge we cannot wholly admit, though we must in general ; in several places she speaks of contrition, and very feelingly too, notwithstanding

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withstanding that pride and her first love fixed on Lothario seem to rule her heart : in the fourth act scene with him she expresses herself thus ;

The hours of folly and of fond delight,  
Are wasted all and fled, those that remain,  
Are doom'd to weeping, anguish and repentance :

After all, a lapse in title, suppose one proved, is but a very slight object for criticism to fix on ; it is like falcons preying upon flies ; especially in respect of this piece, which exhibits a regular plot ; scenes well arranged, characters happily delineated, elegant versification, and instructive sentiments.

Sciolto is a nobleman in principles as well as rank ; apparently nice in his honour, delicate in his patronage, and warm in his parental affection ; eager for the happiness of a darling daughter, and the son of a valued friend, whom he has married her to, on the most generous, disinterested principles ; his miserable disappointment in such a commendable expectation, places him in a situation that wakes the tenderest passions.

Of all the performers we have seen in this character, Mr. POWELL stood eminently foremost ; there was a degree of the pathos about this gentleman in old men never surpassed in our recollection, except by Mr. GARRICK, who must have carried every line of Sciolto to the heart ; however, the transitions of countenance, the breaks of expression, and melting cadences of grief, were as happily supplied by Mr. POWELL as public taste could wish ;

long,

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long, very long, will the parental parts in tragedy labour under the material deficiency of his untimely loss.

Mr. BERRY used to blubber through the part from beginning to end, and Mr. SPARKS was most laboriously uncouth; Mr. AICKIN makes a very meagre figure in it at present in Drury Lane, wanting both characteristic spirit and tenderness; at Covent Garden there is not even a faint apology for the part.

Altamont is possessed of generous and sincere, but very weak principles; so much the dupe of love that every other feeling gives way: he is introduced under such unlucky circumstances, and plays so much upon himself, that to an audience he appears much more languid, than the author intended, and for this reason, he is in general given to some actor as insipid as they imagine him; this stamps him contemptible, and indeed lays him a dead weight upon the play; we remember Mr. BARRY, by exertion of singular merit, making him as respectable as any other character in the piece, though Mr. GARRICK did Lothario, and Mr. SHERIDAN Horatio, upon the same occasion; indeed he so much out-figured his competitors, in the race of fame, and illustrated so beautifully a character scarce known before, that he appeared to great advantage; we have also seen Mr. Ross with particular satisfaction, and undoubtedly, if his fits of negligence could be kept off, he has every requisite to bear up Altamont agreeably.

Mr.

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Mr. DYER, who should never rise above Treffel, in tragedy, has been often shoved on for him, which has ever reminded us of a smart tavern waiter; full of himself, snip, snapping the harmonious lines of Rowe into fritters of poetry; we could name some others equally trifling, but not having words suitable to the wretchedness of their attempts, we shall pass them as the managers should have done, unnoticed.

Horatio is an amiable and valuable character, yet hurried by the zeal of friendship into trespasses upon decorum; his intention we approve, but his manner of accosting Calista, and stigmatizing Altamont is very censurable; his reasoning seems cool, yet his proceedings are precipitate: Mr. QUIN was greatly admired in this part, for what we cannot say, unless mere weight and pomposity of expression were deemed a meritorious contrast to the spirited vivacity of Lothario; his person was no doubt suitably adapted, but a laborious formality of action offended the critical eye, and a monotonous cadence of voice palled the distinguishing ear—Rowe's golden lines hung heavy on his expression, and by their measured harmony, led him into most wearisome recitative of tragedy.

One passage, for which he gained loud applause, deserved nothing but laughter; we mean where he says to Lothario, "I'll meet thee there:" setting himself in a studied position, to shew protuberance of belly in the most striking point of view, he gathered his hands towards his sides, and after a pause of some seconds



seconds shoved them forwards very ungraciously to midwife his short reply into Lothario's hearing; this gentleman had a fine level, and deep tone of voice, but misapplied them so barbarously, that he growled with the one, and chanted with the other.

Mr. SHERIDAN whose voice and person, as we have before observed, rather speak against him, especially in points of importance; nevertheless made a more masterly figure in this part than any person we have seen; he broke with chaste judgment the lines into good sense, without violating just harmony; he sustained the sedateness of the character, and the spirit of it, with equal propriety, and had the merit of much greater uniformity, than any competitor we shall, or can mention; cool without sameness, firm without brutality.

Mr. MOSSOP, with an excellent voice, and a very just idea of his author's meaning, was nevertheless uncouth; painfully sententious when calm, ungen- teely violent when warm, offensively consequential in deportment, abominably austere in feature, full of disagreeable consequence, and moved methodically by the affected rules of premeditate deportment; yet he too had his numerous admirers.

Mr. BARRY was never more mistaken than in this character, which in *his* representation wanted as much as a fine figure and a pleasing voice would admit; he could not be disagreeable, but was—what must he be now?—most egregiously faint and insipid.

Mr.

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Mr. BENSLEY is very inadequate to what might be wished and expected, yet tolerable enough for the present wretched state of capital acting, which sinks below every idea even of moderate, indulgent criticism; if, where there are many others, we should particularise one fault, it may be allowable to say that this gentleman is too fond of aiming at vehemence of expression, without considering propriety of character, or the unstrained extent of his natural powers; we wish him to consider this as a friendly, nor a severe or prejudiced hint.

Lothario is the most reproachable character our moral author ever drew, and indeed as dangerous a one as we know; like the snake with a beautiful variegated skin, which lures the unguarded hand to a poisonous touch; this licentious gallant, gilds his pernicious principles with very delusive qualifications, especially for the fair sex, which cannot be more plainly evinced than by a declaration which has often been made at the representation of this piece, by volatile, unthinking females; who have not scrupled saying, that they would rather be deceived by such a pretty fellow as Lothario, than countenance such a constant, passive, insipid creature as Altamont; yet, upon examination, we do not find one trace of intrinsic merit in his composition; he is sprightly, voluble, amorous and possessed of some courage; but the reverse shews him vain, superficial, inconstant and malevolent; capable not only of ruining a credulous woman who loves him, but on pretence of resentment against the man who has

married her, forward to expose her fatal weakness,<sup>*Fair Penitent.*</sup> and his own inhuman triumph over her unsuspecting virtue.

Mr. GARRICK's execution of this part displayed very emphatic vivacity, and placed him as much above competition, as the extent of the character would admit ; Mr. BARRY was elegant, but wanted fire ; 'Mr. SMITH looks the gallant well, and does not speak him much amiss ; Mr. HOLLAND misrepresented him in every particular ; laborious in the declamatory scenes, turbulent in the spirited ones, and coarse in those of softer nature. Mr. REDDISH is by no means adapted to this tragedy coxcomb : figure and expression are both much against him ; however, he has the satisfaction of over-matching any other male character in the play, as it stands at present in Drury-lane. We remember to have seen one Mr. LACY, a most luxuriant, uncultivated theatrical vegetable, shew great merit in Le-thario ; merely from expressive variety of voice, and a marking countenance ; with perhaps less judgment to guide him than any person in a capital light ever possessed ; it being absolutely certain, that he stumbled upon great strokes by a kind of instinctive impulse, without knowing why or wherefore.

Calista is a lady of insuperable pride and violent passions ; easy of belief, warm in affection, precipitate in resentment ; she appears in no favourable point of view, except from her credulity ; and though we contend for her being a penitent, yet we readily admit she is a reluctant one ; she is one up-

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on compulsive, not voluntary principles ; and therefore, from circumstances peculiarly distressful, alone excites pity ; great powers, and deep feelings, are necessary to do her justice on the stage.

Mrs. CIBBER, beyond every point of dispute, surpassed not only contemporary merit, but what has succeeded even to this day ; the idea of haughtiness she rather failed in, yet her pungent and unequalled distress made ample amends : in the first scene of the fifth act her countenance so aptly painted horror and despair, her thrilling voice so penetrated the heart, that we may say from experience, the height of critical pleasure strained nature into a degree of mental pain.

Mrs. BELLAMY wanted consequence still more than Mrs. CIBBER, was less expressive in features, and more limited in voice ; yet the passages of tenderness were well supported by her ; of these two ladies we must make one general remark, equally chargeable to both ; that is, having a strong taint of the old fashioned titumti utterance.

Mrs. WOFFINGTON, through an unaccountable turn of public caprice, was very well received in Calista, though all her merit was comprehended in elegance of figure ; she was a Lady Townly in heroics, and barked out the penitent with as dissonant notes of voice as ever offended a critical ear ; we allow she was very pleasing to the eye, but highly offensive to cultivated taste.

Mrs. YATES happily conveys the pride and violence of Calista, but, as we apprehend, falls very

short of her distress; in this character, as well as some others, we are to lament, that the lady just mentioned, should indulge a masculine extravagance of Frenchified action; that she should saw the air with her arms, and labour for attitude where it is rather superfluous; this may please the million, but is no point of real merit, and can only be deemed a pitiful trap to catch prostituted applause.

Mrs. BARRY, notwithstanding the disadvantage of an inexpressive, though engaging countenance, stands in our view next to Mrs. CIBBER; if she is fainter in the pathetic than that lady, and less consequential than Mrs. YATES, yet she is certainly more uniform through the whole than either; and has a very evident advantage of both in figure and deportment.

Lavinia is a mere make-shift to eke out the piece; amiable; and what she says is pretty enough; we don't remember to have ever seen her rendered more agreeable than by Mrs. STEPHENS; who, in this, as well as all other medium parts, marks the author's meaning with very just and agreeable sensibility.

The genius of ROWE seemed to consist in richness of fancy, purity of language, justness of images, and harmony of numbers; but was undoubtedly too poetical for the drama, of which every piece he wrote, as well as this, is an evident proof; indeed, the absurd manner of theatrical speaking in his time might lead him to monotony in composition, and jingling rhimes at the end of acts; the only censurable

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censurable part of the FAIR PENITENT, we have pointed out in our animadversions upon Lothario; if no prejudice is done by him to young minds, we must pronounce this one of our best tragedies, considered in the several lights, of character, sentiment, regularity, plot, spirit, and pathos.



## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Written by SHAKESPEARE.

**W**E have neither affixed the stile of tragedy, comedy, nor that of the mingled species to this piece, because it does not properly come under any of those denominations ; at the opening, we are presented with Antonio, who, confessing himself low-spirited, is rallied by two friends, as being thoughtful on account of his merchandize, which charge, however, he denies; Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano enter upon their conversation; the latter also attacks Antonio upon his gloomy visage, and jests very pleasantly on the affectation of gravity, worn by some men as a semblance of wisdom ; the exit of this humorist is so whimsical and sudden, that it would seem as if he was only brought on to teize the merchant with his rhapsodical lecture.

The manner of Bassanio's disclosing his necessitous condition, is very pleasing and suitable to confidential friendship ; his assimilation of venturing a fresh proof of the merchant's kindness, after some he has already made away with, to the school-boy's shooting one arrow in search of another, is fraught with beautiful simplicity ; Antonio's reproof for his friend's using such circumlocution is affectingly generous ; as is the manner of promising assistance when he hears Bassanio's design : to lend even when we have the means in immediate possession is a very liberal

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liberal act; but to strain credit for a friend, as Antonio here proposes, lays an enormous weight of obligation upon gratitude.

The scene between Portia and Nerissa is wrote with much vivacity and great good sense; there is a pleasing peculiarity of sentiment, with pregnant brevity of expression; from the conversation of these females we find, that Portia's father, by will, has fixed the determination of her marriage, upon chusing right from three caskets of gold, silver and lead; the fame of her riches, beauty, and the oddity of winning her by a kind of matrimonial lottery, has drawn many suitors; of all whom, separately, Portia gives a very ludicrous and sarcastical account, especially of the English baron and the Scots lord; upon Nerissa's mention of Bassanio, her opinion softens into the favourable.

Bassanio and Shylock approach next; the former, as it appears, soliciting a loan of three thousand ducats, on the credit of Antonio; as the Jew is a very peculiar character, SHAKESPEARE, according to the custom of his unbounded genius, has furnished him with a peculiar mode of expression; his pondering upon the hazards attending property at sea is the usurer to a hair.—Upon Antonio's entrance, the Israelite makes us acquainted with his motives of antipathy against the merchant: the first of which, his lending out money gratis, shews Shylock to be flinty-hearted: indeed, hating his nation, and personally reviling him, lay a just foundation for dislike; however, we find, that, like a thorough-paced villain, he accosts



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accosts Antonio with a fair face : when mention is made of neither lending or taking money upon advantage, Shylock enters into the defence of usury by a scriptural allusion. Here, our author, though he highly supports character, deviates from delicacy concerning the sheep : in Antonio's reply there is a most veritable stroke of satire upon those, who justify not only error, but infamy from holy writ ;

Mark you this Bassanio,

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose :

Shylock, like other purse-proud knaves, who take liberties with those who borrow money of them, rather rates the merchant, who by generous and spirited contempt, reduces the mercenary sycophant to subtle fawning ; the penalty he proposes on the bond, shews him so provident a villain, that he prepares even for a possibility of wreaking his mortal hatred ; there is something very artful when Bassanio declares against the merchant's signing such a bond, in Shylock's throwing an imputation of villainy on Christians, through their suspicion of other men.

The second act begins with a scene, omitted in representation, but why we know not, between the prince of Morocco and Portia, as preparative to his trying the caskets.

Launcelot, the Jew's man, in a very whimsical soliloquy, communicates an intention of running away from his master ; the contention between his conscience and the fiend, is truly laughable ; old Gobbo's introduction means no more than to give  
Launcelot

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Launcelot an opportunity to display his quibbling, word-catching humour; we wish the scene had a better tendency than mere whim: upon Bassanio's entrance, the father and son attack him in a very odd manner, to take the latter into his service, which he good naturedly consents to; this piece of good luck occasions a dissertation upon the ridiculous study of palmistry, divertingly satirical.

When Gratiano comes to solicit the liberty of going to Belmont with Bassanio, he is warned to check his skipping spirit, to which he makes a very ludicrous profession of gravity.

When Launcelot appears, taking leave of Jessica, we do not approve the expression of her "father's house being Hell, and he a merry devil," nor do we relish Launcelot's insinuation of her being got by a Christian: after he goes off, the young Jewess signifies her hopes of delivery from bondage, by the assistance of her lover Lorenzo; the next short scene is nothing more than preparative for putting the said design into execution.

In the scene between Shylock, Launcelot and Jessica, we find the Jew so much alarmed at the idea of masking in the streets, that he gives Jessica a very punctual and positive charge to shut out even the sound of shallow foppery, as he calls it—we wonder our author did not make the Jew mention having Antonio bound, which, with exulting hopes of getting the forfeit, would have made him much more respectable in this scene, wherein he is now rather

languid ; telling his daughter the circumstance, might have agreeably contrasted her humanity to his malevolence.

The introduction of a song by Lorenzo, under Jessica's window, affords her more suitable time for change of dress, than the author has allowed, and is pleasing enough ; yet we hold it rather inconsistent with the essential privacy of stealing her away ; however she gets safe into her lover's arms, well furnished with jewels and ducats : Morochius's trial of the caskets affords some very noble flights of fancy, and plausible, tho' fallacious reasoning for his fixing on the golden one, which instead of the lady, furnishes him with an excellent lesson in the following lines.

All that glisters is not gold ;  
Often have you heard that told :  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outside to behold :  
Gilded wood may worms enfold—&c. &c.

In the short succeeding scene, between Salanio and Solarino, an admirable description is given of the Jew's distraction at his daughter's elopement ; some hints are thrown out judiciously to wake our apprehension for Antonio's bond, and a most amiable picture is drawn of his unlimited friendship for Bassanio.

The prince of Arragon appears next as a suitor of Portia ; this scene, as well as those of Morochius, is omitted in representation, and we think very blameably, as the progressive regularity of design is thereby interrupted, and many excellent reflections withheld

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withheld from the audience on a train of sophistical deductions; the first candidate persuaded his erring judgment to fix on gold, the second has sense enough on reading the label, "who chuseth me shall gain what many men desire," to reject external ostentation, yet is so vain as to think highly of his own deserts, and therefore chuses where the inscription of the casket runs thus, "who chuses me shall get as much as he deserves," presuming that the lady only can be the reward of his exalted merit; the satire couched in his finding the portrait of an idiot is keen and comprehensive.

At the beginning of the third act, Salanio and Solarino, acquaint the audience, with Antonio's loss of a rich ship; Shylock, foaming with rage, joins them; never were transitions from one passion to another better supported than in this scene; distraction, grief, and malevolence succeed and cross each other admirably, nor can any thing be more happily conceived than the Jew's justification of his own cruelty upon the common rights and sensations of nature, equally incident to his tribe and Christians; upon Tubal's appearance, his agitation rises still higher, and every line that passes between them is excellently imagined to display the united powers of action and utterance.

Bassanio now appears as the third candidate for Portia, and has the advantage of her good wishes for his success; his reflections, previous to fixing a choice, are most sensibly argumentative, and beautifully just; fancy and judgment form a cordial union

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—he succeeds happily to himself, and agreeably to the lady, by rejecting the caquets of glaring and mercenary show ; by fixing on humble and unpromising lead ; this justifies the seemingly odd design of Portia's father, who it appears meant by the proposed choice, to get her a husband of solid understanding ; the courtship of Gratiano and Nerissa, is somewhat odd ; Portia's prejudice, in favour of Bassanio, arises naturally enough from previous knowledge of him, but for the other couple to make so sudden a matrimonial contract, strains the bounds of probability ; and for Gratiano, who moves in the sphere of a gentleman, so instantaneously to pick up a waiting woman for his wife, is rather a precipitate and unaccountable piece of match-making ; however, a double wedding is fixed on, to the satisfaction of all parties —the introduction of Lorenzo and Jessica, before they could be ascertained of Bassanio's authority to entertain them, is rather exceptionable ; however, the letter brought from Antonio, acquainting his friend with the state of bankruptcy he is reduced to, gives a fine turn to affairs ; Bassanio's method of unfolding the lamentable case to Portia, is pathetically delicate, and her desire of paying the bond, even twenty times over, to avoid the fatal penalty, amiably generous ; as is also dispatching her destined husband for the rescue of his friend, even before marriage rites are celebrated.

The ensuing scene where Antonio solicits Shylock has nothing more in it than a confirmation of the Jew's unrelenting determination to abide by his bond ;

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and ; we are certain our author might have very much improved both characters in this interview, had extending them occurred to his imagination ; characters of importance should never be brought on, for trifling purposes.

The scene where Portia gives charge of her house and family to Lorenzo, that she and Nerissa may go to a monastery, during her husband's absence, is prettily devised, to keep the intended metamorphose secret, and, at the same time, to apologize for *her* absence ; the intimation she drops to her confidante, of assuming masculine appearances, awakens curiosity in an audience, and at the same time leaves that curiosity in suspense : there is an indelicate insinuation at the beginning of Portia's speech, when she mentions the change of habit, which we wish was omitted ; by the last line of this scene it appears, that twenty miles will carry them to Venice ; yet, upon Bassanio's setting out for Belmont, we hear of his embarking on ship board ; this seems one of the inconsistencies our author was very apt to slip into.

Launcelot's witticisms with Jessica, are in a strain of drollery, but his allusion to Scylla and Charybdis, is rather too classical for such a character, and his very impertinent behaviour is hardly justifiable in a servant ; the circumstance mentioned by Lorenzo, relative to his amour with a Moorish woman, has no wit or humour to apologize for mentioning the matter before Jessica.

On

On Shylock's being introduced to the court of judicature, to which he has applied for the penalty of his bond, the duke pathetically interposes in the merchant's favour ; to which the Israelite replies, with all the shrewdness of determined cruelty, urging his antipathy as a sufficient reason, for casting aside every humane principle ; persuasion only seems to invigorate his hellish resolution, which not even the offer of enormous pecuniary advantage can alter : when matters are at this crisis, the appearance of Portia as a lawyer, recommended by Doctor Bellario brings on the trial ; however, Portia previously gives a most nervous and beautiful recommendation of mercy, which is so worthy the approbation and recollection of every individual that we should be blameable in not quoting of it.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd ;  
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heav'n  
 Upon the place beneath ; it is twice bless'd ;  
 It blesteth him that gives, and him that takes ;  
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest , it becomes  
 The thron'd monarch better than his crown :  
 His sceptre shews the force of temp'ral pow'r,  
 The attribute to awe and majesty ;  
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings :  
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway,  
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
 It is an attribute to God himself ;  
 And earthly power doth then shew likest God's,  
 When mercy seasons justice—therefore Jew,  
 Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
 That in the course of justice none of us

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Should see salvation—*we do pray for mercy*

*And that same prayer doth teach us all*

*To render the deeds of mercy.*

However we may admire the expression and benevolent tendency of this speech, yet an obvious objection lies against the passage marked by italics; which, as it evidently refers to the Lords's Prayer, ought not to be even hinted at, where a Jew was in question, as it would rather work an irritative than lenitive effect.

Shylock's servile and rapturous adoration of the supposed lawyer, for sustaining the solidity of the bond, is inimitably expressed by exclamations; and the cause works up against Antonio to a very pathetic crisis; when a very natural and most agreeable turn of Portia's, defeats the Jew's blood-thirsty hopes, frees the merchant, and gives general joy: there is not any incident in any drama, which strikes so sudden and so powerful an effect; the retorts of Gratiano are admirably pleasant, and the wretched state to which Shylock is in his turn reduced, is so agreeable a sacrifice to justice, that it conveys inexpressible satisfaction to every feeling mind; the lenity of Antonio is judiciously opposed to the malevolence of his inexorable persecutor.

Upon the Jew's leaving court, Gratiano speaks thus to him: "In christening thou shalt have two godfathers, had I been judge thou shouldst have had ten more, to bring thee to the gallows, not the font;" in this speech our author has made a very censurable slip, by furnishing Gratiano, who is a Venetian,



Venetian, with an observation that refers to the English mode of trial by jury, which the words quoted certainly imply.

What follows to the end of this act, is only a stragem of the ladies to get those rings from their husbands, which they had made them swear not to part with; hence arises some matter to eke forward a piece which should undoubtedly have ended with the trial, as no event of equal force could follow the merchant's acquittal.

At the beginning of the fifth act, Lorenzo and Jessica, in a strain of tender dalliance, play upon the idea of a serene moon-light night very agreeably, till they are interrupted by a messenger, signifying Portia's return, and Launcelot roaring out in simple ecstacy his master's approach; Lorenzo, however, willing to enjoy the beauty of the night, indulges fanciful speculation in the following elegant strain :

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank,  
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
 Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night  
 Become the touches of sweet harmony :  
 Sit Jessica; look how the floor of heav'n,  
 Is thick inlaid with pattens of bright gold :  
 There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdst  
 But in his motion like an angel sings;  
 Still choiring to the young ey'd cherubims :  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth close us in; we cannot hear it.

What follows upon Jessica's remark, that music does not make her chearful, we venture also to give  
 our

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our readers as the subject of general approbation, among the tasteful admirers of poetical excursions.

The reason is your spirits are attentive,  
 For do but note a wild and wanton herd,  
 Or race of youthful and unhandled colts ;  
 Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,  
 If they perchance but hear a trumpet sound  
 Or any air of music touch their ears,  
 You shall perceive them make a mutual stand ;  
 Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze,  
 By the sweet power of music : thus the poet  
 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and floods,  
 Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,  
 But music for a time doth change its nature.  
*The man that bath no music in himself,  
 And is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,  
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils ;  
 The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
 And his affections dark as Erebus :*  
*Let no such man be trusted.*

Though the lines in Italics have been often quoted, and received, as conveying an irrefragable maxim, we must contend that there is considerably more fancy than truth in them, as experience sufficiently proves, from a multitude of instances of bad ears being annexed to good hearts ; let it suffice to say, that one of the greatest writers one of the deepest scholars, one of the most moral and peaceable men of the present age, has so little relish for music, that being carried to hear Alexander's Feast, as set by HANDEL, he shook his head, and said, the performance only convinced him, that insipid, jingling sounds,

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 might spoil the best written piece in the world; from hence we may deem Shakespeare's compliment to harmony rather partially enthusiastic; were it really the case, we have no reason to fear any thing from our political commotions, while music is so much admired as to join processions, attend dinners, &c. nor can a libel, if sung, have any treasonable effect; never was Britain more musically inclined than at present, therefore consequently free from all apprehensions of stratagems and spoils.

Upon Portia's entrance, she sees a light burning in her own hall, which by a stretch of propriety, she assimilates to a good deed in a bad world; had the candle's beams been enveloped with a deep nightly gloom, the allusion might have been allowable; but when the moon has such power as description gives it in this scene, the taper's light must have been very dim and imperfect.

Keeping the characters so long out of doors, when they might as well have been housed, is a wanton breach of probability; however, there they are, and we must enjoy the moon-shine with them: after some very short congratulations, a quarrel starts up between Gratiano and Nerissa, concerning the ring which she obtained from him as the lawyer's clerk—there is an abominable expression in the third line of Gratiano's first speech on this matter.

This dispute catching Portia's ear, she justifies Nerissa's resentment, which occasions Gratiano to rap off that Bassanio gave his ring away; here fresh and very entertaining perplexity arises from  
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well assumed jealousy, on the part of the women; and the arch cause they give for real jealousy to their husbands, the discovery of who really got the rings, and the characters the ladies assumed, brings the piece to a very natural, pleasant and satisfactory conclusion.

This play breaks in upon the unities of time and place materially, however, the plot is not very irregular, and the scenes fall into a tolerable arrangement; we must consider the fifth act but as a kind of after-game, though agreeably supported; and repeat our wish, that Shylock's defeat, with a discovery of the ladies in court, had formed the catastrophe.

Though we cannot trace a general moral, yet from many passages, useful, instructive inferences may be drawn, particularly the choice of the caskets, which shews that humility and judgment obtain meritoriously, what ostentation and, vanity lose; from the Jew's fate may be learned, that persevering cruelty is very capable of drawing ruin on itself—in those scenes where sentiments and expressions of dignity are requisite, we find them amply provided, in less material passages, both are trifling.

Shylock, whose peculiarity of character and language we have hinted, is a most disgraceful picture of human nature; he is drawn, what we think man never was, all shade, not a gleam of light; subtle, selfish, fawning, irascible and tyrannic; as he is like no dramatic personage but himself, the mode of representation should be particular; as to

figure and features, any person and countenance, by dress and other assistance, may be made suitable ; however, there is no doubt but Mr. MACKLIN looks the part as much better than any other person as he plays it ; in the level scenes his voice is most happily suited to that sententious gloominess of expression the author intended ; which, with a sullen solemnity of deportment, marks the character strongly ; in his malevolence, there is a forcible and terrifying ferocity ; in the third act scene, where alternate passions reign, he breaks the tones of utterance, and varies his countenance admirably ; in the dumb action of the trial scene, he is amazingly descriptive ; and through the whole displays such unequalled merit, as justly entitles him to that very comprehensive, though concise compliment, paid him many years ago, " This is the Jew, that SHAKESPEARE drew."

We remember to have seen Mr. SHERIDAN in this part with great pleasure ; he seemed to have a very happy conception, yet fell somewhat short in the executive part ; through the first scene we deem him quite equal to Mr. MACKLIN, and in that speech where the Jew tells Antonio of the abuse he has vented on him, we must allow him some little superiority ; but in the third and fourth acts, comparison must shew him to disadvantage.

However we admire Mr. KING in a great variety of his undertakings, we cannot so far warp opinion as to think him capital in the Jew ; weight, design, and extent of powers, are wanting ; the cruelty does  
not

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not sit easy on his features, nor the violent passions on his voice ; which though agreeably distinct, and happily voluble in comic dialogue, cannot trace nature through any violent transitions ; to this we may attribute his estrangement from the tragic walk ; had he utterance equal to his judgement, easy figure and marking countenance, he would be as conspicuous a favourite with the queen of tears, as he now most justly is with the queen of smiles ; after all, his Shylock is by no means so deficient as many principal parts which might be pointed out at both houses.

Mr. YATES, to the disgrace of propriety, and the utter disgust of critical taste, apologized for this part at Drury-lane for several years, and as a high feast has entertained his particular friends with it lately at Covent Garden ; it is laughable enough to see how, on benefit nights, performers thrust themselves into the most ridiculous undertakings, as if it was the best way of shewing gratitude, to obtrude their own deficiencies on those persons who immediately come for their emolument : there are many parts in which Mr. YATES claims much respect, scarce one in which he could be more contemptible than Shylock ; a quaint, snip snap mode of expression, enervates the author's meaning ; a dissonant harshness of tone, mars every line, and a total barrenness of power causes insipidity to flag every scene ; if he does conceive the author's meaning, as we doubt not he may, his performance leaves

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it an unrevealed secret to the audience—may this gentleman never mutilate a line of blank verse again.

Mr. SPARKS and Mr. BERRY both figured the merchant well, but wanted that smooth, elegant placidity with which the character is drawn; the latter was drowsy, the former industrious to make something of the part, which he could never hit off; we have heard of BERRY's doing the part in Dublin, and form a very favourable idea of him, as we also do of Mr. ROSS's capabilities; but of all who have come immediately under our notice, we must considerably prefer Mr. REDDISH; though justice directs us to allow Mr. CLARKE a commendable share of merit also.

Bassanio, in our opinion, has not for several years been happily disposed of; Mess. RYAN and HARWARD canted him very much in the old stile, and were not at all adequate in external appearance; Mr. BENSLEY, at present, wants greatly that mellow flow of expression, which several of the beautiful passages that occur in this part require; in the trial scene he wants as well as the gentlemen above named did; that pathetic expression of voice and countenance which tender friendship so deeply wounded claims; indeed it is very common for the performers, during this awful transaction, to be wholly inattentive, except when speaking, which is a most unpardonable fault; as every word that passes should be re-echo'd by the features of persons so materially interested.

Mr.

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Mr. CAUTHERLY—why do we meet with this misapplied young man, staggering under the weight of Shakespeare's pregnant sentiments and nervous lines ; if there is any respect due for the public, any pity left for him, we request that his inadequate, parroted abilities, may never be incumbered with any thing more important than a mere walking gentleman ; his vacant look and unvarying delivery of Bassanio's reflections, are a flat contraction to the tenor of them ; we have seen him much better performed in the country, and never worse any where.

Gratiano is a sportful blade, who received great spirit from the animated and characteristic performance of the late Mr. PALMER ; Mess. DYER and DODD, who, considering difference of age, manifest a very similar degree of merit, preserve the whim of this part agreeably enough ; but to do him strict justice, he should be in the much abler hands of Mr. KING.

Launcelot, another child of laughter, was represented with extreme pleasant propriety by Mr. WOODWARD ; why he should grow too great to do it at present, we know not ; the archness and simplicity requisite, were blended by him judiciously. Mr. SHUTER, as in many other things, touches the risible faculties with his Humour-pregnant face, but moved upon no principles except those of mere mummery ; so much himself, that he very seldom can be any thing else.

Mr.



Mr. WILLIAM PALMER, of Drury Lane theatre, who fortunately possesses the Naivetè of low comedy, exhibits this quibbling simpleton with extreme pleasant propriety, and in appearance justifies his complaint of having ribs easily felt from shortness of commons ; while comical Ned, of Covent Garden, contradicts that observation by very evident externals of good cheer—Old Gobbo has no claim upon Mr. PARSONS for any deficiency ; we don't recollect any other person worth notice.

Portia has fallen to the lot of several capital ladies ; and indeed she not only requires, but merits the exertion of eminent abilities ; Mrs. WOFFINGTON, whose deportment in a male character, was so free and elegant, whose figure was so proportionate and delicate, notwithstanding a voice unfavourable for declamation, must, in our opinion, stand foremost ; her first scene was supported with an uncommon degree of spirited archness ; her behaviour during Bassanio's choice of the caskets, conveyed a strong picture of unstudied anxiety ; the trial scene she sustained with amiable dignity, the speech upon mercy she marked as well as any body else ; and, in the fifth act, she carried on the sham quarrel in a very laughable manner ; to sum up all, while in petticoats, she shewed the woman of solid sense, and real fashion ; when in breeches, the man of education, judgment and gentility—Mrs. ABINGTON treads so much in her steps, and has so many of the happy requisites just mentioned, that we make

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no scruple of placing her second upon the whole ; nay, in some particular places, we think her equal.

Miss MACKLIN undoubtedly speaks the part in an unexceptionable manner, but we deem her rather too petit in person and expression ; Mrs. CLIVE, who obtained no small share of applause, was a ludicrous burlesque on the character, every feature and limb contrasted the idea SHAKESPEARE gives us of Portia ; in the spirited scene she was clumsy, and spoke them in the same strain of chambermaid delicacy she did Lappet or Flippanta ; in the grave part—sure never was such a female put into breeches before !—she was awkwardly dissonant ; and, as if conscious she could not get through without the aid of trick, flew to the pitiful resource of taking off the peculiarity of some judge, or noted lawyer ; from which wise stroke, she created laughter in a scene where the deepest attention should be preserved, till Gratiano's retorts upon the Jew, work a contrary effect.

Mrs. YATES, with an amazing degree of condescension, has lately vouchsafed to perform Portia, for that night only—*that night only*, the phrase is so modest, that we repeat it—if she can do the part better than any body else, the public in general, and the managers in particular, have a right to expect her in it whenever the play is done ; if she is not so capable as the person in possession of it, why should she impose upon her friends, even for one night ; this is one out of many low, theatrical finesses, thrown out as baits to catch gudgeons ; however, if this la-

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dy thinks criticism has any cause to languish for a repetition of her Portia, she is utterly mistaken; since it is certain that, deducting her great name, and some merit in the fourth act, she has shewn nothing more than that capital talents may occasionally dwindle into very middling execution.

Nerissa, as a mere foil to Portia, is of so little consequence, that we shall only mention the horrid impropriety of managerical conduct at Covent Garden, to push on Mrs. VINCENT for her; a lady so much advanced in years, and who, in the bloom of life, was but very ill calculated for representing any thing in boy's cloaths—shame, where is thy blush—

From a critical retrospect we may assert, that our author has not only well chosen, but also well supported the several characters in this piece; that the incidents are affecting, many of the sentiments sublime, and the versification worthy of SHAKESPEARE; some of the prose dialogue sinks into the word catching, so fashionable in his day, and which, according to our apprehension, he meant to ridicule; there is an alteration of this play, called the Jew of Venice, by Lord Landsdown, who has taken pains to preserve regularity; yet in so doing, like other alterers, has greatly enervated the piece he meant to improve: our author has as few superfluities, or censurable passages, in his MERCHANT of VENICE, as any piece he ever wrote; and, if it is not among the most powerful efforts of his genius, it certainly yields precedence to very few, either in the study or theatre.

## The COMMISSARY.

A COMEDY by Mr. FOOTE.

**C**Riticisms upon authors or performers who have paid the debt of nature, are apt to be considered by many persons as the effect of prejudice, good naturedly weak, or enviously severe ; those upon living persons, of either character, are generally supposed as the offspring of interested views, personal attachment, or partial antipathy : however, as we have hitherto endeavoured, and we hope successfully, to hold the ballance with an unbiassed hand ; as we disclaim all connections with, or personal influence from the pieces or actors considered ; as we have indiscriminately praised the same authors and performers in one place, whom we have censured in another, it is ardently hoped we shall stand, through our whole undertaking, unimpeached with servile flattery, or illiberal censure ; and that what we offer will be received as real, though often, perhaps, very fallible opinion ; we have already shared the common fate of all similar productions ; that is, being deemed too mild by some, too tart by others ; as it is impossible to please all, we shall still steer a steady medium course, and prove ourselves strict friends of the drama, though some of its sons and proselytes should look upon us with indignant eyes.

If to laugh vice and folly out of countenance, is a more certain, as well as more pleasant method of

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 reforming national conduct into prudence and virtue, than dry declamation, or brow-beating authority ; if to shoot folly as it flies, and to catch living manners, be the grand taste of merit in comic writings, we must examine how far the gentleman now before us, has, in the piece we are going to consider, answered those valuable purposes.

Some persons of low extraction, low capacities for any thing but gain, low fortunes and lower principles, having accumulated princely fortunes by plunder from their bleeding country, and those hardy sons of war who were fighting for the common liberties of Europe, became so extravagantly vain of their sudden ill gotten pelf, that they wanted to shine forth what nature never designed them for, and art could not make them accomplished gentlemen ; one particularly, though in the vale of years, aimed as ignorantly at cutting a figure in the gay and great world ; unbounded riches secure such reptiles from legal punishment ; who then can be fitter game for dramatic satire to hunt with her keen lash through the mazes of ridicule ?

Availing himself most happily of such a luxuriant subject, the author of the COMMISSARY has titled his piece from the very station in which some of the rapacious blood-suckers moved, and lays the scene of it in the house of a lady, Mrs. Mechlin, for whom, if we are rightly informed, there is an infamous living original ; her handmaid Jenny remarks, upon loud knocking at the door, that the Commissary's lodging in their house, occasions business enough for a porter ;

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a porter ; upon her letting in Simon, who enquires for her mistress, a conversation ensues ; by which we learn, that the good gentlewoman of the house has summoned him in an earnest manner ; being as appears, a practised and useful agent for her underhand iniquitous purposes : upon expressing himself rather disagreeably, the maid gives a warm rhapsodical account of her mistress's character and consequence, which he adds spirits to, by timely interruptions of a sneering, ironical nature ; at length, when she has run herself out of both words and wind, he, in the self-same manner, reverses the picture she has drawn, while she supports the force and vivacity of his description as he did hers ; this is a very pleasing pit pat, and judicious manner of revealing Mrs. Mechlin's, or any other character, infinitely beyond the dull narrative mode adopted by many dramatic writers.

Simon's striking portrait enflames Jenny, who on hearing her mistress at the door, puts him into an apprehension that she'll reveal his sentiments ; however, she gives the matter a whimsical turn, and brings him off—nothing can be more naturally characteristic than Mrs. Mechlin's importance, displayed in weariness and fretful breaks ; the coachman is also furnished with expressions highly suitable, and though, the craving, extortionate disposition of such fellows, may be deemed a trifling, it is yet a just object of exposition, and is here placed in a very laughable point of view.

What

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What ensues, when Mrs. Mechlin enquires if any body has called upon her, may be called the scorpion's sting of well merited satire, darted at those in the great world, who bestow, through such vile agents, even church preferments upon those who will flatter or help to conceal their vices; by marrying a cast off mistress, or making any sordid concession, an honest mind must necessarily start at, though wrapped in a rusty cassock, and the impoverished drudge of a penurious Cumberland curacy.

The stroke of a pearl necklace belonging to a lady who is gone to Mrs. Cornelys's, is an exquisite remembrance to many of the fair sex, who lavish health, beauty, and fortune, not only in Soho Square, but in many other places of polite resort; which reduce them often to the shameful resource of pawning, not only their moveables for a little present supply, but also their honours for the indulgence of a little credit from fortunate antagonists.

Upon Jenny's going out, her mistress is entering upon the communication of an important concern; but is interrupted by the appearance of Widow Loveit; this amorous elderly lady comes as we find upon a matrimonial errand; to provide herself with a comfortable husband, by the kind, able assistance of her match-making friend, Mrs. Mechlin; the folly of age, and especially in the female sex, hunting after a matrimonial connection with youth, is very humorously set forth in this scene; pretended grief for one husband, attended by warm wishes for another, is poignant satire against hypocritical sorrow; and

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and we know not any passage of equal length, which contains more useful meaning than the following remark ; “ I wonder they don’t add a clause to the act to prevent the old from marrying clandestinely, as well as the young ; I am sure there are as many unsuitable matches at this time of life as the other.”

After the widow’s departure, Mrs. Mechlin opens the Commissary’s character, circumstances, and peculiarities to Simon, whom she engages in a design she has formed of uniting her opulent lodger to a niece of her own, who has been debauched by a musician ; the part she assigns him to appear in, is a domestic of Miss Dolly’s, under the character of a Scot’s earl’s daughter ; part of his instructions she refers to another opportunity, and in soliloquy reflects upon the precariousness of her own business, which occasions her to drop severe, though oblique hints against some dissolute persons of fashion.

Upon Dolly Mechlin’s appearance, the provident aunt urges her to sign a conditional bond in return for helping her to so advantageous a marriage ; the niece’s hesitation upon this matter enflames her so much, that she enters into a warm recapitulation of the favours she has conferred, and stigmatizes the character of Dr. Catgut with just severity ; this intimidates the young woman to compliance ; the approach of Isaac Fungus, brother to the Commissary, breaks off their conference.

This rough citizen, having met with nobody but a Frenchman, who can’t speak English, to give him an answer, vents his rage upon the alarmed valet ; upon Mrs. Mechlin’s appearance, he complains of the  
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 unintelligible domestic, and in cynical terms throws out a very commendable sarcasm, against those who are so fond of exotic reptiles.

Isaac being dispatched upstairs, to her brother, Paduasoy, a silk mercer, is introduced to Mrs. Mechlin; from what passes between them, we derive a pleasing and useful exposition of tricks which are often played upon the credulous admirers of foreign manufactures; Mrs. Mechlin's device of having some old silks seized at her house, as contraband, that, by being publicly burnt, they may serve as a kind of advertisement where such goods can be had, is excellent; such impositions are a glaring mark of fashionable folly, and if there must be such a prevalent weakness, we entirely agree with Mrs. Mechlin, that persons of her sort, who sell goods of home fabrication under foreign titles, deserve a premium rather than censure.

The two brothers and Mrs. Mechlin, begin the second act, when the Commissary, teeming with ideas of gentility, rates the more rational cit in a ludicrous stile, and by having the lady of his party, whose business it is to flatter his peculiarities, he humourously triumphs in his supposed advantage of taste and judgement; the extreme folly of a man advanced in years, putting himself under tuition for those accomplishments which only appertain to youth, is here exposed with infinite pleasantry; the dissertation upon fencing, the supposed quarrel, the confusion of Wilkins, Hopkins, and Jenkins, as names of the person quarrelled with; Isaac's interruptions, and at last fencing with Mrs. Mechlin,

*Commissary.*

lin, who proves too many for him, are passages of as much humour as can well be imagined; indeed their effect in action prove it.

The transition to Zac Fungus's marriage, is a variation of merit, and his account of the lady's pedigree, makes a strong satirical appeal to risible faculties; the latter part of this scene is sustained with great spirit, and throws out some excellent hints of the wretched dependency a person of inferior rank must reduce himself to, who ridiculously marries a woman merely for the pride of blood.

The introduction of Mr. Gruel, a master of oratory, gives a fresh turn to conversation, and sets the Commissary's whimsical weakness in a diverting point of view; it is impossible not to feel strongly, the account he gives of those means by which we speak, and of the distinctions between a small mouth and a large one, illustrated by whistling and bawling—Gruel's pedantic, methodical mode of expression, is a keen reproach to those who undertake to teach others, what they are not capable of themselves; and the oration, which Fungus delivers, as a specimen of his abilities, is a truly laughable piece of circumlocution; mention of his riding-master being in waiting, carries off this oratorical pupil, who apologizes for his abrupt departure, by observing, that his desire to be a finished gentleman, as soon as possible, puts it out of his power to stick long to any one thing.

Gruel's teizing Mrs. Mechlin with an explanation of female eloquence, confirms his character as a for-

mal, opinionated coxcomb—some persons <sup>Commissionary</sup> have thought, that too great contempt is thrown by our author upon oratory; but we can by no means find out any design of that nature; the art of speaking in public is certainly deserving of high estimation; and, it is to be wished, it was more happily cultivated; but enthusiasm upon every occasion, merits ridicule; if sanguine or interested professors pretend to make orators of persons, neither conception nor expression for; if in general, they only teach people the follies by rule, certainly such instructors be stigmatized as knaves or fools, and their pupils become fit objects for laughter.

Dr. Catgut's scene with Mrs. Mechlin, in strong colours, the absurdities of a man, whose genius will be long admired, but whose conduct has much obscured it with a cloud of indiscretions, to give them no worse a title: his declining the profession, in which the public has allowed him peculiar merit, to commence poet, for which character he has not the smallest capability, is well hit off; and the two stanza's introduced, are an excellent burlesque upon the insignificant, namby-pamby style of modern song-writing, so much admired when equipped with a tune; at the latter end of this scene, we find the doctor meditating a cheat on his good acquaintance, Mrs. Mechlin, under the semblance of friendship.

The third act opens with Harpy, a lawyer, young Loveit, the widow's son, and Jenny; it ap-

pears,

*Commissary:*

pears, that the honest attorney, knowing Mrs. Mechlin's abilities to find provision and employment for both sexes, has brought Loveit for her assistance, which she promises, and immediately points out the means, a rich widow, of sixty, who wants a husband ; this proposition proving agreeable to all, the young adventurer and Harpy go off, to make room for the Commissary and his riding-master, who now advance upon us—Fungus, full of his matrimonial transaction, and no doubt to give Mr. Bridoun a more exalted idea of his approaching consequence, questions Mrs. Mechlin, in a whimsical manner, about his intended bride, whom he touches up with ladyship in every short sentence ; having promised to improve his dress, after a short lesson, he and Mr. Bridoun proceed to business.

His ambition of riding a long-tail'd horse in Hyde Park, or in clouds of summer-dust on the King's Road, his asking if the carpenters have brought home his new horse, his suggestion of natural-born gentlemen, and the introduction of his palfrey, are a fund of satiric drollery ; his preparation for mounting, taking his position, and falling off, are extravagantly laughable ; it has been objected by some over-nice critics, that this scene is too pantomimical for comedy, but we think not ; if every man, as Tristram Shandy observes, has his natural hobby-horse, why should a wooden-headed Commissary be denied his artificial one ? besides, the whim is not at all inconsistent with other parts of the character, which keep within the bounds of probability

—Mrs. Mechlin's announcing the approach of Lady Sacharissa, terminates this scene, and makes room for the amorous widow, who comes to know how her matrimonial expectations are likely to succeed, when she receives intelligence, much to her satisfaction; this short interview is not without considerable pleasantry.

Dolly, as Lady Sacharissa, and Jenny the maid, have a short tete-a-tete previous to Fungus's entrance, in which the latter solicits employment, as servant to the former, when married, but is refused on account of their knowing each other too well; this repulse suggests a resentment, which Jenny hints just as the Commissary appears new rigged.

The following scene of courtship is excellently wrought up, the lady's Caledonian precision, Fungus's awkward servility, his studied address, and the artful conduct of Mrs. Mechlin, all co-operate, like lights and shades in painting, to render the picture expressive and pleasing: when our Commissary's grand nuptial concern is settled, young Loveit comes according to appointment, and prepares to encounter his gilded unknown bride—but lo, to dash their mutual hopes, his mother steps forward; he sustains the shock with some pleasantry, but the old lady dissolves into tears; a circumstance which surprizes Mrs. Mechlin, and occasions some confusion, till the match-making lady promises to settle matters some other way; for this purpose, when Fungus and Dolly appear, she attributes Mrs. Loveit's

Loveit's

*Commissary.*

veit's agitation of spirits to the ill behaviour of her son.

Matters being brought now to the grand crisis, unluckily, both for Mrs. Mechlin and her niece, Dr. Catgut comes in abruptly, accosts his intimate acquaintance Dolly, with great freedom ; at which, Fungus naturally pricks up his ears, but with great confidence still asserts his lady's nobility of blood, and richness of pedigree, till the Doctor's perseverance, and his brother Isaac's appearance more awaken him, and necessitate Mrs. Mechlin to acknowledge the imposture, which she does with more assurance, having Zachary bound in a penal obligation to consummate the proposed marriage ; this occasions him to make a sharp reflection upon her harpy-like disposition, which she answers with a satirical stroke of great keenness and general tendency ; intimating—we wish the rhimes had been omitted—that she only preys on the *follies* of mankind, while the Commissary tribe devour the *vitals* of a whole nation with unrelenting rapacity.

Aristotle himself, could not have desired a stricter preservation of time and place than is maintained in this comedy ; the plot is regular, and the scenes intermingled well ; but we think there is a lapse of poetical justice at the catastrophe, in suffering such a woman as Mrs. Mechlin to go off triumphant, though at the expence of a fool : Isaac Fungus might have been furnished with some discovery relative to her, that might have given him an opportunity of retaliation ; we think also, that making the Commissary

missary himself renounce his childish <sup>Commissary.</sup> pursuits, would have sustained the part better at last, and shewn a conclusive effect from the dilemma he has escaped, and the penalty he has brought himself under.

We do not remember to have perused or heard any dramatic author, whose dialogue shews a greater degree of spontaneous, entertaining spirit than Mr. Foote's; if it is not enriched with absolute wit, there are nevertheless many peculiar emanations of sentiments, and much pregnancy of expression; his characters are always alive, his incidents nouvelle, his satire poignant, and all his scenes free from that languor which most writers occasionally fall into; his personages, at least the striking ones, are all drawn from life, and with such a happy degree of execution that they are not more generally seen than known; and this, we are bold to affirm, is the true way to make the stage a salutary school of manners.

Zachary Fungus and his brother, are most excellently contrasted; the one a dupe to extravagant notions of gay life, the other pent up in the narrow compass of mechanical ideas; the former a coxcomical fool, the latter a rational, though unpolished trader—Mr. Foote's performers being as transient as swallows, who appear only in summer, and almost every year change their station, we cannot pretend to enquire into the merit of any but those most known.

The author of this piece has not a greater flow of imagination in writing, than he has of force and rapidity

*Commiffary.*

pidity in representation; as no man can compose, so no performer can act in his stile, except by very faint and inadequate imitation; his features and utterance are equally well calculated to tickle the livelier, sportive feelings; which is evident from the laughable effect he works upon numbers of spectators, who frequently cannot comprehend the allusive meaning couched in what he says; but admire it, as Boniface does Greek, for the facility with which it is spoken.

In the Commiffary he manifests indescribable ease and vivacity; literally observing Shakespeare's rule of suiting the action to the word, the word to the action; particularly in the riding scene, where it is hard to say which excels most, his gesture, his looks, or his utterance; in short, though chiefly confin'd to his own productions at present, we will venture to assert, that if natural disposition had not bent this gentleman to write in a peculiar manner, and to support that peculiarity by his own performance, he would have done many characters much more justice than they have met from other hands; as it is, both as author and actor, he may justly cry out with Richard, though upon a far more comfortable principle, "*I am myself alone.*"

Isaac Fungus, it is true, requires no very material talents in representation; however, Mr. SOWDON deserves praise for supporting him in a characteristic manner; and of this gentleman we must add, that when in Drury Lane theatre, as well as on the Dublin stage, he sustained many characters of capital importance, much better than the present possessors of them do in any of the houses.

Mr.



## 112 The DRAMATIC CENSOR.

Mr. SHUTER played the old widow with singular humour, and Mr. SPARKS was not much amiss in the representation of her; Mr. PARSONS was much better in Doctor Catgut than probably we shall see again, though as to the sick, monkey-face, Mr SUMMERS, looked it inimitably—Mr. WESTON is so well in the Coachman, that we heartily wish for more of him; and Mrs. GARDNER hits off the convenient Mrs. Mechlin with talents worthy warm applause; this lady is much wanted at Drury Lane, to save several of Mrs. CLIVE's parts from the dreadful mutilation they undergo at present; as to all other persons we have seen, in this piece they are totally effaced from the table of memory.

It would be a point of critical injustice, not to say that Mr. WILKINSON, who possesses good imitative faculties, may give pleasure in the COMMISSARY, to those who have not seen the original; but, for our parts, we must declare against FOOTE, as well as GARRICK, at second-hand.

We shall take leave of this comedy, with heartily wishing, for public good, that the author's patent was a winter, instead of a summer one; the mental gloom, for which Britons are so remarkable, is not materially prevalent in the sun-shine, as the cloudy season; wherefore, it would be better if this dramatic electrician was to practice when enthusiasm, spleen and suicide, most commonly lay baleful siege to the human spirits and understanding.

## VENICE PRESERVED.

A Tragedy by OTWAY.

**O**TWAY has been deservedly distinguished as a tragic writer by the epithet tender; indeed his two living pieces, the ORPHAN, and that we are now entering upon, never fail to call a melting tribute from the heart, evidenced by tear-filled eyes; yet we may justly compare them to a couple of females possessed of bewitching features, manifesting offensive deformity of shape.

Among the exceptionable passages and circumstances we must pass previous censure at large upon every scene where Aquilina is concerned, as superfluously prejudicial to regularity, offensive to decency, impotently ludicrous, and contemptibly absurd; as a justification for the author, it is said, the buffoon senator Antonio, was introduced to caricature the Earl of Shaftesbury, by order of Charles the second; a monarch more remarkable for unessential humour and licentious dissipation, than moral feelings or solid sense. His late majesty, we have been informed, once ordered the scenes we condemn to be restored in action; which is not so much to be wondered at, if we consider his very limited knowledge of the English language; however, the audience exerted their undoubted right to critical authority, and snatching them even from royal influence, sentenced most justly such vile excrescences to obli-

vion : we wish they were omitted in print as well as on the stage.

VENICE PRESERVED opens with Priuli, a senator, upbraiding Jaffier as the instrument of disgrace and perplexity to his family, by having stolen his daughter ; the old man's taunts are severe, and in some places illiberal, Jaffier's defence is the real delicate offspring of a modest mind deeply affected ; his description of the circumstance which engaged Belvidera's affection, is poetically interesting, and justifies her stealing into a match with the person who gallantly preserved her life at hazard of his own : Priuli's unrelenting nature, as well as the poverty of his son-in-law, are laid open with natural striking propriety ; from what he says in his last speech of this scene, we are apt to pronounce dressing Jaffier in rich cloaths an impropriety ; it is not to be supposed that a man, who is upon the errand of sollicitation for pecuniary assistance, should equip himself with splendid garments ; or, if he had done so, Priuli must naturally have said, instead of " reduce the glittering trappings of thy *wife*," reduce *thy* glittering trappings—Yet we have often seen the author's meaning reversed—Jaffier wearing a superb suit, and Belvidera equipped with a plain black velvet, which is as humble an appearance as any lady can assume on the stage ; one point we think the author might have availed himself of in this scene, which would have prevented the charge of disobedience against Belvidera, and the abuse of confidence in Jaffier's clandestinely marrying her ;

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that

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that is, to have made it appear Priuli had denied his consent to make them mutually happy ; the father's carrying his resentment even to the second generation, and wishing that a helpless infant may want bread, is a shocking, and therefore blameable picture of depraved nature ; he might have been drawn an obstinate, without being pictured a savage parent ; the following line of Jaffier's is a gross breach of measure

But I might send her back to you with contumely

The account of Jaffier's circumstances, given by himself in his soliloquy after Priuli's departure, speaks to a feeling heart affectingly ; Pierre, at his entrance, and in some speeches afterwards, makes us agreeably acquainted with his own character ; the dissertation upon villainy and rogues in power are admirable ; however, something further on, where mention is made of Aquilina, Pierre sinks much in our esteem ; wherefore the mode of representation, by omitting all those passages, does our author a piece of justice he should have done himself.

There is a great degree of dramatic policy in making Pierre unite Jaffier's sufferings with those of the public ; the feelings of poverty are an excellent ground for artifice to work upon ; an honest mind, incumbered with care, may be very susceptible of such impressions, as in a state of freedom it would effectually resist ; the picture drawn both of the national and Jaffier's private sufferings, is very distinct, and highly finished ; the different parts of Pierre's narrative, are finely imagined and powerfully

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fully enforced; his mention of Priuli, as having signed the legal authority for plundering Jaffier's dwelling, falls in well to rouse that unfortunate man's mind into a state of desperation; which purpose he more effectually compleats, by his introduction of Belvidera as the capital figure in that group of distressful images which he has presented to view; Jaffier's manner of receiving the melancholy tidings, his melting only at the sufferings of her he loves, recommends his character much; and his reluctance to enter upon vindictive measures of a public nature, though irritated by private wrongs, is commendable; however, we find that Pierre so far touches the master-string of his heart, as to precipitate him into a sympathetic degree of resentment; in consequence of which, an assignation is made to meet on the Rialto at midnight, which Pierre very improperly calls his *evening* walk of meditation; *lonely* would we apprehend suit the season much better than *evening*.

After his friend's exit, Jaffier, in a short and apt soliloquy, descants on his own distressful state; justly remarking, that sensibility, in such a situation, must be a source of pain; Belvidera's entrance immediately after the excellent preparation we have just received for her, is happily designed; she comes upon us in the double view of a most oppressed daughter, and unhappy, though amiable wife; the tender treatment she affords her afflicted husband amidst misfortunes, as it stands forth an indisputable test of inviolable affection, so it conveys

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an admirable lesson, to the fair sex; intimating, that she who will not endeavour to smoothe the thorny pillow of adversity, does not by any means deserve to participate the luxuriant down of prosperity; indeed, this scene abounds with those soft sensations, which our author in every view expresses so beautifully; and it closes with a striking assimilation of Jaffier's misfortunes to a shipwrecked merchant, in which is couched a delicate compliment to his faithful partner; yet, exclusive of pitiful jingle, there never were more indifferent lines than the triplet which carries them off the stage.

Having disavowed all connection with the scenes of Aquilina, we shall begin the second act where it commences in representation; here we find Jaffier on the Rialto, uttering in soliloquy, those gloomy sentiments consequent to his desperate circumstances; but his adverting to the old woman's notion of Satan's personally appearing for the work of temptation is ridiculous—The cynical encounter between him and Pierre, before they know each other, is suitable; and in a direct compliment to canine fidelity, throws an oblique, yet cutting and just sarcasm on human hypocrisy: Pierre's contemptuous mention of priests and praying, though somewhat founded in truth, is censurable; religion should not be treated lightly, even by a profligate upon the stage; but OTWAY unfortunately lived when genius was employed to sneer or laugh every degree of decency out of countenance, nor indeed was such depravity of

of national taste to be wondered at, when the court was an absolute fountain of iniquity.

Pierre's enquiry for Belvidera, and giving his friend some money for present exigence, is an artful preparative for his main design, though we cannot think the purse so delicately introduced as it should have been ; indeed, Jaffier's observation upon it shews, that he esteems it as a bribe, and for no very amiable purpose ; Pierre however pursues his plan, and by mention of Priuli, again agitates Jaffier to the purpose in view, who vents his passion in terms very illiberal, even allowing for peculiar provocation ; his readiness to blast with curses almost the whole city, is a touch of madness ; and his insinuation respecting the wives and daughters of senators abominably gross : Pierre's method of explaining his purpose is well conceived ; in his friend's reply to the proposed oath of fercecy, there is another line contemptibly low,

Green-sickness girls, &c.

and we would prefer a material objection against Jaffier's wild declaration, that he could kill even an honest senator, through the antipathy he has entertained against knavish ones.

From some passages in this scene, we are led to consider the conspirators as men of sublime characters, how far their principles and conduct fulfil the idea, we shall discover on a general survey of the piece ; the place of this conference, a public bridge, seems, though at midnight, but ill chosen for the subject which engages their attention ; a subject of  
such

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such deep concern, as required the most cautious, impenetrable secrecy; yet from the tenor of their words, the characters speak out as if indifferent who heard them.

By the book we are told, that the next scene lies at the house of Aquilina, a noted Greek courtesan, which place of rendezvous we cannot deem very reputable for persons aiming at the glorious characters of heroes and patriots; in such a house, however, Renault, a capital character in the conspiracy, presents himself, ruminating in some emphatic lines, upon that dangerous and turbulent impulse of the mind—Ambition, which, with great propriety, he assimilates to a beautiful elevation of prospect, placed on a sandy precarious foundation.

From his reply to Spinosa, we perceive the old gentleman is of a testy disposition, indeed, so important a transaction, should not be dallied with; therefore, his impatience for the other conspirators, is a natural and prudent feeling; his reflection upon Elliot, as an Englishman, is beneath the tragic muse; it serves the purpose of occasioning a little misgiving, which Bedamar reconciles; this Bedamar, as the author has drawn him, might very well have passed for an untitled knave; but that history informs us he was the Spanish ambassador, who officially fomented the conspiracy, with a view to ruin the state of Venice; wherefore, it is strange that our author did not make him a more conspicuous acting personage.

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The compliments reciprocally paid by the conspirators to each other in the Roman titles they appropriate, is truly whimsical; as to Brutus and Cassius they may be admitted patrons of liberty; but for Cataline and Cethegus, who were notorious sons of faction they seem an odd couple to introduce; Renault's description of the Venetian state is very striking, and fully justifies taking violent measures for redress; however, we can by no means approve the following exultation of Pierre, which seems the cruel effusion of a mind delighting in mischief;

How lovely the Adriatic whore  
Dressed in her flames—will shine—devouring flames!  
Such as shall burn her to the watry bottom,  
And hiss in her foundation.

A man of public spirit must ever enter upon such transactions with reluctance, though necessary, and lament the inevitable distresses consequent to civil commotions; his preparative speeches for the introduction of Jaffier are pleasingly expressed; and Jaffier himself, except where he too talks of setting the city in flames, shews a considerable share of spirit—his offering Belvidera as a pledge of his faith is as strange and uncouth a circumstance as ever we met. In the first scene of this act he tells Pierre, that he has lodged her at the house of a *friend*; it now appears, that Aquilina is that friend; a very ill chosen one for the delicate and modest Belvidera; who from her own account, has been asleep in the house of a courtesan, a house too frequented by a number of dissolute persons; there is, however, something  
so

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so seriously affecting in the sacrifice Jaffier makes of tenderness to his new connection, such melting matter to steal upon the heart in Belvidera's expressions, that an audience, and almost a reader, must forgive the palpable breach of propriety we have just pointed out.

After the lady's departure, little could be said to engage attention, wherefore the author has judiciously brought the act to a speedy conclusion; but there is great reason to wish that he had not disgraced his genius, by exhibiting such a group of strained images in eight or ten bombast lines, which contain little poetry, and less meaning; the last speech carries off the friends laughably, we wish something more suitable was substituted.

Jumping over the jack-pudding senator and Aquilina, who intrude themselves for three Bartholomew Fair pages upon us in print, we commence the third act with Belvidera's soliloquy, which on account of a material objection against some part of it, we chuse to transcribe.

I'm sacrific'd—I'm sold—betray'd to shame,

Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me ;

*No sooner was I to my bed repair'd,*

*To weigh and weeping, ponder my condition ;*

*But the old hoary wretch, to whose false care*

*My peace and honour was entrusted, came*

*Like Tarquin ghastly with infernal lust.*

O thou Roman Lucrece ! thou couldst find friends

To vindicate thy wrong——

I never had but one and he's prov'd false :]

He that should guard my virtue has betray'd it.

The five lines marked by Italics in the foregoing soliloquy are superfluous, without any degree of beauty to plead an excuse for inserting them; there is no reason to think Belvidera would tell herself of the ill usage she has received from Renault, and as to informing the audience, they are much better made acquainted with the circumstance by her necessarily opening the matter afterwards to Jaffier.

Upon her husband's appearance, she complains very justly of his cold and culpable behaviour, to which he returns some tender, but unsatisfactory expressions; Belvidera plays every engine of female artifice, to wind into the meaning of his mysterious conduct, which he resists till she mentions the villainy of her occasional guardian; this leads to the discovery: We cannot express sufficient abhorrence of the savage entertainment he proposes for her in seeing her father, and three-fourths of the citizens massacred—What idea he must have of his wife's humanity we know not, but what follows would disgrace the mouth and feelings of an obdurate scalping Indian.

Nay, the throats of the whole senate  
 Shall bleed, my Belvidera. He amongst us  
 Who spares his father, brother, or his friend,  
 Is damn'd.—How rich and beauteous will the face  
 Of ruin look when *these* wide streets run blood?  
 I and the glorious partners of my fortune,  
 Shouting and striding o'er the prostrate dead  
 Still to new waste; whilst thou far off in safety,  
 Smiling shalt see the wonders of our daring,  
 And when night comes with praise and love receive me.

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We apprehend saying *these* wide streets is an error, as they are in a room during this scene ; admitting Jaffier pointed out of a window to shew the seat of action, *these* would be the grammatical term, but we should prefer the word *our* to either ; however, this is a blemish little worth notice, where the whole passage is shocking to humanity—A delicate woman to praise and love her husband for playing the assassin even upon her own father, to place such a one as a pleased spectatress of outrageous cruelty, makes her in idea a rival to Roman Tullia ; who, after causing the death of an aged sire, whirled her chariot triumphantly over his mangled limbs.

Belvidera very naturally shrinks at what she has heard, but in reproving her husband for associating with such an abandoned blood-thirsty crew, she descends to some mean, unbecoming epithets. His paltry, because ill-grounded panegyric upon the conspirators, leads her to a directly full and positive charge against Renault, which shudders Jaffier, though we really cannot find the amorous old gentleman so much to blame ; he received, upon very odd terms, a woman who had been lodged in a brothel by her husband ; it was not a very unnatural supposition that a lady so circumstanced might be adapted to his purpose ; nevertheless, upon hearing his attack, Jaffier, who having acted as fool or knave, or both, now determines to play the madman, breaths the spirit of revenge, from which Belvidera seems to draw some comfort ; her affectionate departure and repetition of Remember twelve, please much.

When Pierre approaches, he rallies his friend as being uxorious, in the following passage :

Hunt a wife on the dull *foil*.

We have often seen it printed, and sometimes heard it spoke *foil*, but the change is totally absurd, and breaks the allusion, which evidently points to the chace : that Jaffier should reveal to his friend as an object of strict confidence what he has just heard from his wife is probable, but that any author should have the assurance to affront an audience with such gross stuff, such fulsome description as we find in this short scene, is surprising : it should be much softened, or much curtailed.

Pierre's desire of having the matter rest for some-time is prudent, and Jaffier's consent to bear the wrong for the present, commendably reluctant ; Renault's entrance produces, as might well be expected, a serio comic encounter, which seems just kindling to a flame, when the conspirators entering, put a stop to the matter.

During Renault's charge, which is delivered with politic energy, Jaffier manifests that dislike to his associates and their measures, which the invasion of his wife's virtue has created ; he who a small time since seemed to triumph in a general effusion of blood, now calls Renault a horrid slave for uttering such sanguinary orders, and slinks away from the conclusive meeting in a very strange manner. Renault, who wishes him dead, on account of his wife, immediately pronounces him an object of suspicion and danger ;

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danger ; this alarms the generous feelings of Pierre's friendship, who asserts his merit, and mentions the circumstance of Belvidera ; much heat ensues, general destruction to their scheme and lives seems impending, when Renault's peevish retreat, and a mighty odd concession of the other conspirators, restores harmony.

Pierre shews to considerable advantage in this scene, as being a rogue of some principle, but the triplet with which he concludes the act, is truly lamentable.

By what passes in the first scene of the fourth act we perceive, that Belvidera has influenced Jaffier to discover the conspiracy ; which, though a breach of faith she paints, and with some justice, in a virtuous light ; for most certain it is, that moral and social honesty directs us rather to break than obscure an engagement of evil tendency ; the anxious suspense of his mind is very natural, till removed by the mention of Renault's attack upon his wife's virtue ; her picture of the impending dangers is drawing in striking colours, and her persuasion determines Jaffier ; however, the author, to soften his breach of faith, by making it in some measure an act of necessity, introduces an officer, who takes him prisoner, in consequence of an order from the senate, by him they are conducted off.

The Duke and senators in council appear next ; to whom Priuli gives a general intimation of surrounding perils ; his information comes, he says, from unknown hands ; this takes some blame from Jaffier

also ; when introduced, he addresses himself to the court with that bluntness which a mind agitated like his might well suggest ; and his contempt of their threats shews commendable spirit ; by the book it appears, that he has brought a written list of his friends which we have also seen performers produce, on first mentioning the matter ; this is improper, for we cannot suppose, that when such an ample discovery is in their view, and may be seized by force, that the senators would put themselves under the obligation of an oath ; wherefore Jaffier instead of shewing a list when he utters these words “ whose names are here enrolled ” — should at the word *here* clap his hand on his breast — by which the senate may be led to think the secret lies beyond their reach, except through his voluntary confession.

Though Antonio's speeches in this scene are ludicrously impertinent, yet they occasion a fine sarcasm upon authority, which, instead of maintaining impartial justice, meanly bends to indulge vicious greatness ; we mean where the Duke orders Aquilina's house, as she is a senator's mistress, to be *searched with decency*.

Jaffier's compunction for what he has done, carries on his character with uniformity ; upon his being ordered off, Pierre, and the other conspirators appear in custody, which cannot proceed from Jaffier's information, which has been only just delivered in ; so that though he may be said to confirm their crimination, yet he is not the original cause of their ruin : Pierre's address is specious and spirited, he

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he wears his chains with an admirable grace, and by a kind of popular sophistry, turns ignominy into ornament.

Nothing was ever better imagined for action than confronting the friends ; Pierre's cordial undisguised address, upon seeing Jaffier in custody, diminishes the latter greatly, he lessens in our view, and by the confession of his guilt, becomes contemptible ; while the other rogues, by an unbending spirit of perseverance claim some allowance of pity and praise.

After the court breaks up, Jaffier and Pierre are judiciously left to a conference, wherein we find them contrasted in a masterly manner ; conscious guilt cloaths one with contrite submission, deeply provoked resentment warms the other to violent disdain ; each is sustained with the genius of ability, and we are alternately prejudiced in favour of both. Jaffier's great and tender anxiety for the life of his friend, is amiable ; and Pierre's generous contempt of an existence under the burthen of disgrace, is truly noble ; nor can we deem his passion rigorous, when casting aside all Jaffier's concessions, he swears never to hold friendly intercourse with him again.

Every spectator, or reader, who is acquainted with the human mind, who can see and forgive the failings of a fellow-creature, plunged amidst inextricable toils of perplexity, must here sympathize in the perturbation of Jaffier, who is now wrought up to look upon his beloved and loving wife, as the great source of his most pungent misery : the conflict between love, honour, and injured friendship, rises to the  
borders



borders of distraction, when Belvidera appears, who, conscious of the dagger she has planted in her husband's heart, fears to see him, yet has no other guardian, no shelter but his love that she can fly to; in this lamentable state they approach each other, when Jaffier gives a pitiable relation of the rough treatment, the opprobrious terms he has received, which draws from Belvidera an aggravating account of the sentence passed upon Pierre; this works upon Jaffier in a powerful manner, and his passion gathers like those hurricanes which lie sometime embodied in a gloomy cloud, before they rush forth with irresistible impetuosity; vengeance points a sanguine dagger towards the unhappy Belvidera, the affectionate husband wishes her away, yet resolves upon a sacrifice, and even aims the fatal blow, till beautifully disarmed by the melting embraces of the woman, who apparently rules, amidst the utmost turbulence of passion, his captivated, amorous heart.

This turn of the scene has a very pleasing and forceable effect, it seldom fails to draw from sensibility tears of joy, and deputing Belvidera as a mediatix to intercede with her father for his friends, leaves an audience in agreeable suspense at the end of the fourth act.

Priuli opens the fifth act with reflecting on his own painful situation; by his soliloquy, it appears that family pride is the foundation of unnatural behaviour to his unhappy daughter; what the author meant by putting on a veil to obscure Belvidera we know not, but she approaches her father shrouded in

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in one, and addresses him for some time as a suppliant unknown ; when discovered, the sight of her works parental feelings in the old man's breast, which she improves by reminding him of the likeness she bears to her mother ; mention of her husband, however, calls forth a start of resentment ; but it soon passes off, when she relates the danger her life is in ; her story is told with great persuasion, and operates successfully to the point she has in view, Priuli relents with unlimited tenderness, and promises to save the conspirators ; there is a pretty, tender concession at the close of the scene, in the father's acknowledging his past harshness, and promising future protection.

Aquilina and Antonio, as to what they say, here intervene again very absurdly ; however, something is certainly wanting to prevent Jaffier's immediate entrance upon the departure of his wife and father-in-law, as examination of what follows will plainly evince : his soliloquy borders too much upon the bedlamite strain, and carries presumptuous horror with it ; admitting pungent distress capable of such execrations, it is a natural extremity which should not be given to the public ear ; on Belvidera's approach, overjoyed we may presume with what she supposes agreeable tidings, Jaffier turns from her, and immediately mentions that Priuli's mercy exerted itself too late ; this is the circumstance which calls for a separation of the first scene from this, for if Jaffier appears the very instant that Priuli goes off the stage, how can he know that he has promised

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to save the conspirators'; or how is there time for Priuli's making the trial, which, according to the following line he has done, though unsuccessfully.

Thy father's ill-tim'd mercy came too late.

To remove this inconsistency, which we cannot blame the author for, as he wrote an intervening scene, which gave time for Jaffier to be acquainted with the matter, we would recommend an alteration of the passage to such gentlemen as hereafter represent the character, to the following or similar effect :

Thy father's mercy, should he now relent,  
Would come too late—the doom is fix'd  
Of all my poor, betray'd, unhappy friends ;  
They are summon'd to prepare for fate's black hour,  
Yet I still live.

The shock of this information causes Belvidera to court fate even from a husband's hands, which she does so much in the melting manner, that his distraction softens into sympathetic tears, and the scene becomes inexpressibly pathetic, especially where he pronounces a blessing on his unhappy wife ; and she, stung with the thoughts of party, parodys it into a curse : mention of their tender infant carries grief to its utmost extent, and the parting of this wretched couple, engrosses all the tenderest feelings of humanity.

Belvidera's soliloquy, we think, would be better omitted, as it runs into a strain of bombastic madness, not properly deducible from, or suited to her situation ; what she speaks also when her father

comes

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comes on is contemptible, and truly deserves GAY's burlesque, which, though we are not fond of burlesque in general, we think deserves notice here.

Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing flowers,  
Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber,  
are thus laughably ridiculed by Kitty Carrot, in the  
What d'ye call it :

Bagpipes in butter, flocks in fleecy mountains,  
Churns, sheep-hooks, seas of milk, and honey mountains.

We now encounter Pierre at the place of execution, where, as the author has wrote the part, he expresses some disrespectful ideas of religious preparation for death ; these speeches, which OTWAY certainly wrote to flatter a licentious age, are commendably omitted in representation, for there are too many persons ready to slight sacred institutions, without the countenance and information of dramatic poets.

Exclusive of what we thus object to, Pierre's deportment is gallant and praise-worthy ; Jaffier, on whom sorrow has impressed her deepest seal to mark him as her own, comes to take a final leave of that friend, who, as he thinks, has been wholly brought to infamy and death, by his ungrateful breach of confidence ; the pungent contrition of one character, and the generous forgiveness, nay, tender condescension of the other, are most interestingly mingled : we wish Jaffier's proposition of killing not only his wife but infant also did not occur : Pierre's desire of

evading an ignominious death is very natural to a brave man, and though as a Christian Jaffier has no right to take life, especially his own, we cannot see how a mind so frenzied as his could have acted otherwise; however, we think our author might have furnished his piece with a better catastrophe, as in the proper place shall be pointed out.

Pierre's expiring with a laugh of exultation, is peculiar and well imagined; Jaffier also concludes characteristically, with those pathetic sensations of conjugal affection which seem to have effected his ruin.

In the next scene Belvidera's madness is much better supported than where it first seizes her, as every expression points at her husband. From an invincible antipathy to all embodied ghosts, except that most pardonable one of Hamlet's father, we think the appearance of Jaffier and his friend would have been more justifiable as the effect of imagination, than rising through trap-doors with whitened faces and bloody shirts, those childish finesses of the stage. Belvidera's dying so suddenly of distraction, which is rather flighty than raging, seems an exaggeration of physical consequences; however, she terminates an object of that pity, which through every preceding scene, she has so powerfully excited; Priuli's resolution of retiring from the world is natural, but his speech, and the piece are disgraced by a most miserable couplet.

We observed, that the catastrophe of this play might have been thrown into a better form, though perhaps

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perhaps not with such rigid adherence to poetical justice. If we consider that not one character except the Duke, Priuli and the Officer is left alive, **VENICE PRESERVED** must appear a most sanguine production, a mere theatrical shambles; wherefore, it is apprehended, that if the author, just when Jaffier is lifting the dagger, had introduced Priuli with a pardon for Pierre, the surprize and change must have been very pleasing to an audience; by this the father would have essentially softened his character, the affectionate couple would have been made happy, and Pierre, the most pardonable of the conspirators, would have been saved to serve the state, which evil connections had urged him to destroy. The senators also would have been partly relieved from the positive and general charge of perjury, which now lies against them for the breach of their conditional oath, so solemnly given to Jaffier.

Among fifteen male personages in this play, not one moral character appears—What an unfavourable picture of human nature! calculated to make us hate, not only a part, but the whole of our species; out of so large a number there are but four of any acting merit, those only we shall consider, the others being mere under engines of the plot.

Jaffier is weak, irresolute, rash, affectionate, cruel, friendly, treacherous; an unnatural compound of such contrarieties as never were jumbled in the heart of man; yet he is introduced under such circumstances, and is furnished with so many fine passages for capital utterance, that we know but few parts in

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which a first rate actor can more deeply engage the attention and applause of an audience.

Messrs. GARRICK and BARRY had such an equality of merit in the representation of Jaffier, that to place either first would rather be partial, and to draw a fair parallel requires the nicest equilibrium of criticism, as they have severally made us feel, so we shall present them to the public, and hope such great originals may not suffer from our inadequate painting. In the first scene Mr. BARRY's appearance strikes particularly, his externals strongly apologize for Belvidera's attachment, exclusive of gratitude for saving her life ; when he describes plunging after her into the Adriatic, there is a scope, an expansion of figure, which fills the idea conveyed in this passage

Like a rich conquest in one hand I bore her,

And with the other dash'd those saucy waves,

Which throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize.

Indeed, through the whole first act, and the first scene of the second, this gentleman could not be surpassed ; but, where Belvidera is delivered to the conspirators, we must give Mr. GARRICK considerable preference, for looks most powerfully expressive, and piercing notes of expression. In the first scene of the third act equality again took place ; the short subsequent interviews with Pierre and Renault were manifestly on Mr. GARRICK's side, whose merit has caused us to lament, that what the author has written so censurably, should be rendered so agreeable in action. Before the senate, and through the following scene we must also place him first, from a superior

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rior significance of feature to express violent agitation of mind. Upon Belvidera's entrance, Mr. BARRY must be admitted to lead, till Belvidera tells him of the torments which are preparing for his friends, then Mr. GARRICK steps forward and beggars description, by an amazing variety of transitions, tones, and picturesque attitudes ; the distracted confusion which flames in his countenance, and the gleams of love which shed momentary softness on the stern glow of rage, exhibit more complicated beauties than any other piece of theatrical execution we have seen. In the last speech of the fourth act, Mr. BARRY was peculiarly happy. Through the whole fifth act, we must lean to Mr. GARRICK, whose peculiar excellence in breaks and half lines is universally acknowledged, and of such Jaffier is in this act chiefly made up. If ghosts must appear, we shall acknowledge Mr. BARRY the most striking we have seen.

Mr. RYAN was deemed very respectable in this character, yet, exclusive of the last scene of the fourth act, where we admit his merit, he neither spoke nor looked in our remembrance characteristically.

Messrs. POWELL and ROSS were as near a parallel as the two great competitors above mentioned, the one deserved praise for tender, the other for amorous expression ; however, neither could reach the violent passions of Jaffier by many degrees, want of power prevented the former, and negligence or dullness of feeling the latter.

Pierre



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Pierre describes himself as a fine, gay, bold-faced villain, and a villain he truly is, labouring for the destruction of his native country, on the most paltry pretence of provocation, no other than being rivalled in a favourite courtesan, yet he has the assurance to talk of liberty ; indeed, from the picture OTWAY has drawn of this conspiracy, he seems to have had a political view, which was to throw an odium on all those who had resisted the FIRST CHARLES'S measures, and those who had spirit enough to complain of his son's proceedings. A courtly poet, and that OTWAY was such, vide his mean, sycophantic dedication, will ever shew popular spirit in an unfavourable light ; nothing could tend more to this than making the conspirators a set of complete, desperate scoundrels. As a proof of our suggestion, we refer to the Epilogue, and if such be the tendency of the piece, it is unworthy countenance in a free state.

When three of the following names are perused, it will possibly appear strange, that we venture to place Mr. SHERIDAN foremost in Pierre, but as we either have, or ought to have pronounced his judgment at least upon an equality to that of any performer within our knowledge ; as in this part his powers operated more happily than in any other of equal fire ; as in the descriptive, the persuasive, and the disdainful parts ; the vindication, the reproach, and the forgiveness of Jaffier, he was equally excellent ; it is but just to give him precedence of those competitors  
who

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who struck out only a few occasional beauties, tho' perhaps in them particular places superior to him.

Mr. Mossop has the capability of excellence, but by having either an erring or laborious judgment, misapplies his talents grossly ; in the two first acts, where open, genteel, generous freedom is required, he toils through a strained insipidity of expression : in the third, where Jaffier's honesty is impeached, he totally loses the gentleman, and bullies the conspirators like a bravo ; there is a delicacy, even in the rapidity of passion, which he seems unacquainted with. Before the senate, and in the subsequent scene with Jaffier, his naturally contemptuous aspect, and his uncommon extent of voice, operate happily ; but, in the fifth act, he forgives his friend with a countenance as if he was going to knock him down.

Mr. BARRY was a very agreeable, but, in the critical view, indefensible Pierre ; a melifluous flow of expression, and harmonious consonance of features, much better suited to Jaffier, lessened an essential contrast, and rather contradicted the idea we have of this bold militarian ; the eye and ear, however, were pleased, while judgment sat covered with a reluctant frown.

Mr. QUIN, who was by many esteemed a standard of perfection, rolled most heavily through the part ; he recitativèd the calmer, and bellowed the more spirited scenes ; in the line

I could have hugg'd the greasy rogues, they pleas'd me ;  
his execration of the senate, and a few passages in

the dying scene, he was very fortunate, but through all the rest much more like a heavy-headed, methodical, saturnine pedagogue, than what the author meant.

Mr. BENSLEY is as formal, though not so important as the last mentioned gentleman, and aims much more at lavished applause than critical propriety, forgetting this indisputable truth in public life, that he who modestly steals through an arduous undertaking, is much more commendable than the person who confidently exposes inadequate abilities, and endeavours to pass them current by the stamp of self-sufficiency.

Mr. HOLLAND, in the character of Pierre, gave evident marks of the school where he originally studied acting, we mean the spouting-club, stiff without dignity, and sonorous without meaning, totally void of originality, mounted and hobbling on the awkward stilts of imitation. Mr. AICKIN, in a modest prologue, lately placed himself beneath this gentleman, but he need not have paid his abilities so bad a compliment.

Renault was admirably supported by Mr. SPARKS, who shewed something in the representation of him that we have never seen hit off by any performer but himself; in giving the charge, in professing sycophantic friendship for Jaffier, and in the confusion occasioned by Pierre's reproaches, he far outstripped all competition. Mr. BURTON gets through him without deserving praise, yet does not incur censure. If the part was about half as long again, there would be

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be danger of his setting an audience asleep, but, as it is, he passes off as an inoffensive relief to attention. We apprehend Renault to be more in Mr. GIBSON's compass, than any other tragedy part whatever.

Mr. HAVARD was as pleasing in Priuli as the part would admit ; nor was Mr. RIDOUT void of considerable merit. Mr. BANNISTER, at present, sustains it with ability at Drury Lane, and Mr. HULL should rescue it from less able talents at Covent Garden.

Belvidera is an amiable, consistent character, constant and rational in affection, superior to the frowns of poverty, yet possessed of quick and delicate sensibility ; she towers above misfortunes, while they affect circumstances only, but naturally sinks under an accumulation of unhappy effects wrought by them.

Mrs. CIBBER and Mrs. BELLAMY, had each singular merit in this part ; however, the former, who had a countenance most exquisitely formed to express anguish and distraction, far surpassed her competitor in those scenes where deep and violent feelings occur, while the latter, from an amorous glow of features and utterance, excelled in the passages relative to conjugal affection ; her description of the madness, such as it is, was preferable to Mrs. CIBBER's, because more disengaged.

Mrs. BARRY treads close on the heels of the two ladies mentioned, and, if not so strikingly conspicuous in particular places as either, she is more equal

through the whole than both ; what her countenance wants of expression, she makes up in a considerable superiority of figure, being possessed of a more amiable dignity of appearance than any theatrical lady we remember.

To sum up our opinion of this tragedy, we shall observe, that OTWAY seems to have had little else in view than catching the passions at any rate, which most certainly he has effected ; breaches of decorum and delicacy were no objects of his caution, he wrote to the heart without properly remembering the head ; wherefore, his plot, though tolerably regular, will, we apprehend, from what has been observed, appear defective. His language is free, and his versification flowing, but the latter is not always correct, nor the former chaste ; his sentiments are lively and pathetic, but in many places strained, and in more licentious. As to his characters, we cannot offer a better general criticism than that of Mr. ADDISON, who writes in one of the Spectators as follows :

“ The greatest characters in VENICE PRESERVED are those of rebels and traitors ; had the hero of this play discovered the same good qualities in defence of his country, that he shews for its ruin and subversion, the audience could not enough pity and admire him ; but, as he is now represented, we can only say of him, what the Roman historian says of Cataline, that his fall would have been glorious, *si pro patria sic concidisset*, had he so fallen in the service of his country.”

# THE MINOR.

A COMEDY by Mr. FOOTE.

**T**HE author of this piece has always been allowed a pleasing peculiarity in his dramatic writings; they evidently discover that excellent definition of wit, a quick conception and an easy delivery. The comedy now before us, was ushered originally into public view by a prelusive scene between Mr. FOOTE, in his private capacity, and two buckish critics of his acquaintance. In the first part of their discourse, some very sensible and spirited remarks on those objects most proper for ridicule occur. We may discover that a charge of too much personality in his satire, led the author into this able defence of himself: it being also a ticklish point, to expose even most egregious and prejudicial enthusiasm on the stage; he prepared the audience for what they were to expect, and has in the following passage, beyond confutation, justified his design; not only as free from censure, but as worthy national countenance and applause.

Speaking of that burlesque upon religion and common sense, Methodism, he says emphatically: "This is madness, which argument can never cure; and should a little wholesome severity be applied, persecution would be the immediate cry: Where then can we have recourse, but to the comic muse? Perhaps the archness and severity of her smile may redress

*Minor.*  
redress an evil that the laws cannot reach, or reason reclaim.”

Sir William Wealthy and his brother Richard, open the first act. A difference of opinion relative to education, is the subject of their conversation; the baronet is lectured with a considerable share of good sense by the merchant, for giving his son a fashionable education; and he judiciously retorts upon the cit, those prejudices which arise from contracted ideas and a defective knowledge of life. From the latter part of this scene we find, that one is a liberal, the other a rigid father; that Sir William has tenderly laid a scheme for the reformation of his son, while Richard has discarded a daughter for some trifling trespass.

Capias, the attorney's letter, is humourously characteristic; and Shift, who is recommended as a proper agent for Sir William's design, gives, in his conversation with that gentleman, a most ludicrous account of his birth, parentage, and education; the picture of his progress through life, is in the true Hogarth style of dramatic painting; and the ludicrous account of his own abilities, makes Sir William lay open his design for the reformation of his dissipated heir; a design commendably laid; as severe feelings of those ill consequences which gaming in particular produces, are most likely to work a change of conduct in thoughtless youth. Shift's readiness to enter upon any service for his own emolument, and the design expressed in his soliloquy, of sticking to the most profitable party, fulfil the idea furnished by his name.

The

*Minor.*

The Minor, and one of his gambling friends appear next. The former displays elevated notions of fashion, elegance and false honour ; the latter expresses himself happily in a kind of knowing cant. The intimation of Mrs. Cole's having called, is a good preparative for her appearance, and some poignant strokes upon her hypocritical connection are thrown out. Sir William entering as the baron gives a new turn to conversation, and shews the son in a fresh view of vicious prodigality ; that of taking an Italian opera-singer into keeping upon most extravagant terms, which he deems moderate : A most excellent stroke of keen satire occurs from the Minor's observation, that he only knows her to be a handsome woman by report, against those children of fashionable profusion, who expend large sums for unenjoyed superfluities. Upon Loader's going off to conduct Mrs. Cole, the young gentleman lets fall a remark which we apprehend, many persons of distinction might justly apply to themselves : " to say truth, I am sincerely sick of my acquaintance ; but, however, I have the first people of the kingdom to keep me in countenance ; death and the dice level all distinctions."

Never was a better picture drawn of debauched enthusiasm, than presents itself in the old baud, whose whole conversation exhibits a natural, laughable jumble of affected sanctity and real vice ; the conscientiousness she boasts in her infamous profession, of not tipping Sir Timothy Totter, an old trader, is admirably suggested ; and advertising in the register-office,



*Minor.*  
 fice, to decoy young girls into a state of prostitution, is well levelled against places where, we doubt not, most sinister practices have been carried on, to the ruin of many an unsuspecting female ; this scene must afford real entertainment to all ages, and considerable instruction to the younger part of an audience, upon whom externals frequently make prejudicial impressions. What Sir George says of the new birth teachers, well deserves quotation: " No wonder these preachers have plenty of proselytes, while they have the address so comfortably to blend the hitherto jarring interests of the two worlds."

At the commencement of the second act, our Minor and Transfer, a money-jobber, meet for the purpose of raising some cash for Sir George's present occasions. In this scene the usurer is supported much in character, the difficulties he relates of meeting any ready money, the expedient he proposes of furnishing some goods, are in the true usurious strain ; the young baronet's resentment of such a strange, and to him unintelligible proposition, is natural ; and Loader's interposition when Transfer disappears, plainly manifests the blood-sucking gambler, who, having got a pidgeon, determines to unfeather him at any rate. Upon Transfer's second appearance, the precipitation of prodigal youth into any terms that may supply its cravings, and the rapacious advantages taken of it by avaricious knaves, are set forth in a masterly manner ; Loader also is conspicuous for so readily giving away what is not his own.

Richard

*Minor.*

Richard Wealthy comes to expostulate with his nephew upon the life he leads, and says some very rational things. His remark upon what are usually called debts of honour, is pregnant with useful truth. "Here's a prostitution of words—Honour!—'Sdeath, that a rascal who has picked your pocket, shall have his crime gilded with the most sacred distinction, and his plunder punctually paid, while the industrious mechanic, who ministers to your very wants, shall have his debts delayed, and his demand treated as insolent."

The Minor, however, deaf to reason, treats his uncle's advice with levity, which occasions the latter to start another topic relative to a proposed marriage with his daughter; by the by, he calls her an only daughter, though we find by the piece he has three, Lucy, whom he has turned out of his house, Charlotte, whom he mentions in the first scene, and Margery, named by Sir George in this. This, however, is not a very material slip—The young gentleman's behaviour on mention of the match, shews the taint he has received of family pride, and the conversation is pleasantly conducted, till the cit rouses into a commendable feeling of the light treatment he has met, and utters some very home truths.

The Baron's behaviour on hearing a soap-boiler mentioned as Sir George's ancestor, is in the true stile of Germanic pride, which is idle and impertinent enough to value antiquity of descent more than personal merit. By Mr. Loader's assiduity to raise cash, we have Shift introduced as an auctioneer,

named Smirk, from him we collect several strokes of sterling humour; his relation of the accident which occasioned him to succeed Mr. Prig, is a fund of mirth, and his debate about what wig to wear in his public capacity, appeals strongly to laughter. There is not perhaps a greater degree of imposition than at auctions, especially the middle sort, and it is to be wished, that our author had enlarged more upon the folly of numbers who frequent such places, and the knavery of a great majority of such as conduct them; however, he seems to have aimed at little more than exposing the coxcomby insignificance of a particular well known person.

At the beginning of the third act, we find our Minor has embarrassed his circumstances most violently; however, his reflection is interrupted by Mrs. Cole's introduction of a young female, as a mistress for Sir George: his first approaches to the lady favour of the rake, but upon her pathetic address, he indulges her with patient, generous, humane attention; she relates her artless, yet affecting tale, with such success, that she works an intended instrument of her ruin into a kind and disinterested protector; this scene not only raises tender sensations, but also a curiosity in spectators to know more of Lucy than she chuses to discover; it gives us most amiable impressions of Sir George, who appears not to be vicious for want of virtue, but for want of reflection and prudence; and it stands an incontestible proof that our author's genius, though the parent of smiles, can produce matter of a serious and important nature.

*Minor.*

ture, with a glow of expression equal to that which cloaths the lighter and more spirited parts of his compositions.

Sir William Wealthy and his brother Richard now appear, signifying, that matters are brought to a catastrophe ; Shift acquaints them, that the Minor has discovered Loader and another gamester in the act of fraud ; upon his words the two worthy disciples of cinque and quatre are driven in with keen reproaches and deep threats, Sir William is attacked too as the Baron by his enraged son, and pious Mrs. Cole meets as severe a rebuff in her turn ; constables being introduced, Sir William is necessitated to discover himself ; upon being proved his father, the young gentleman acknowledges him with dutiful affection ; the gamesters, through Sir William's connection, stand convicted, and young Wealthy acknowledges himself in fault, but pleads a strong argument of exculpation, or rather reconciliation, which on his going off Shift explains. To render his generous treatment of the young lady more engaging, a most beautiful incident strikes us in the discovery of her being Mr. Richard Wealthy's banished daughter, who has been reduced to such a perilous state by her father's rigidity : the cit being convicted of, and repentant for unjustifiable behaviour, consents to make the young couple happy, in a matrimonial union ; thus the piece agreeably slides into a termination, upon the strictest principles of moral and poetical justice.

*Minor:*

The Epilogue, by Shift, is an excellent and pleasant burlesque upon the strained, rhapsodical, figurative mode of expression, adopted by the saints of Tottenham Court and Moorfields, to supply the place of that reason which nature has denied them, or enjoying, they suppress for venal, impious purposes.

The author at present under consideration, among many other dramatic excellencies, has one not to be found in the writings of many who enjoy a great share of public estimation; that is, never incumbering his audience with make-shift, explanatory scenes: all his personages appear to some pleasing and essential purpose; those of ten lines speaking as much for the station they are placed in, as those who have a hundred or more to repeat; there are no forced incidents, no laboured sentiments, but a regular succession of scenes, a dependent connection of events, a judicious contrast of characters, a constant and copious supply of keen satire, solid sense, social benevolence, or pleasant repartee. Above all, he most successfully proves, that the pitiful resource for humour in CHARLES'S days is totally unnecessary, where there is real genius to emanate spontaneously. Thus much we have thought due to Mr. FOOTE; but as we profess, neither to praise nor censure without reason of our side, let us examine from the view we have just had of his MINOR, whether he merits such approbation or not.

The

*Minor.*

The MINOR conveys a forceable and extensive moral. The two brothers, as parents, shew that a kind, patient, prudent father, is more likely to work salutary effects for his child, than a rigid, impetuous, and positive one. From Lucy's happy deliverance we may learn, that persevering virtue can disarm vice, and create a protector when least expected. By Loader we perceive, that a time of discovery, shame, and punishment, waits upon the most plausible villainy. And Mrs. Cole discovers that hypocrisy is at best a paultry veil, which rather hides the wearer from self-perception, than from the penetrating glance of reason's eye; and that enthusiasm is parent of vice, making supposed sanctity an attonement for the breach of every obligation human and divine.

Young Wealthy, in point of character, is an easy, sensible, well principled, but dissipated gentleman, capable of discovering his unworthy attachments, but not resolute enough to break through them, till stung to the quick by the terrifying frown of impending ruin, and an absolute discovery of fraud. When this comedy was done at Drury-Lane, Mr. HOLLAND represented the Minor, but was egregiously defective in ease and vivacity. We have seen two or three others, whose names we forget, figure away in it very inadequately. Mr. J. AICKIN, last summer, seemed to convey the author's meaning with propriety, but wanted an essential showiness of person, and fell rather short in point of spirit.

Sir

Sir William's acting merit, lies entirely in the <sup>Minor;</sup> Baron assumed, which Mr. BADDELY hit off with a very masterly degree of execution. If Mr. CASTLE does not rise up to an equality of merit, he yet deserves considerable approbation. Richard Wealthy was never so well as in the hands of Mr. BURTON, who looked and spoke him very respectably.

Loader, who is the best drawn gamester we know, sat easy upon Mr. DAVIS, whose conception and expression, as an actor, seem best adapted to the characteristic jargon of this part; there is a kind of bastard gentility in his deportment, and a becoming effrontery of countenance to delineate happily a six-to-four gentleman. Mr. KEARNY reduced Loader, last summer, to such a prick-in-the-belt, Field-lane sharper, that the Minor must be considered as a fool, to be one moment imposed on by so legible a knave.

Shift, is a part of extreme difficult execution; every line of which, tells from Mr. FOOTE's unequalled rapidity of expression. However, Mr. BANNISTER has great merit in his first scene; but when he introduces his happy imitations, we are sorry to recollect a passage in the prelusive scene, which condemns mimicry of performers in very just terms. In the Auctioneer, there is a most laughable peculiarity struck out by Mr. FOOTE.

Transfer is a well drawn usurer; he was well represented by Mr. BLAKES, much better by Mr. WESTON, excellently well by Mr. PARSONS.

Mr.

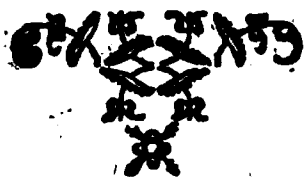
*Minor.*

Mr. Foote's excellence in the transitions and contrast parts of Mrs. Cole's character is so well, so universally known, that we shall not attempt to describe, particularly, that merit which we cannot find words equal to.

Lucy, though a short character, made a most delicate and engaging part of the evening's entertainment, when personated by Miss PRITCHARD, afterwards Mrs. PALMER: nor does she appear the least languid, when represented by Mrs. JEFFERIES.

Upon the whole, we apprehend, it cannot be deemed an error of judgment, or partial favour, to pronounce this comedy, one of the most entertaining, original, and useful pieces, now in possession of the stage.

We have seen, and with concern, the MINOR lately advertised at Drury-Lane in TWO ACTS: it is illiberal to farcify the comedy of a living author, so distinctly situated as Mr. Foote; and we hope, the managers will never again countenance such unfair theatrical depredation.





## K I N G   L E A R.

## A T R A G E D Y.

Altered from Shakespear, by Tate and Colman.

**T**H E person who enters upon dramatic alteration, without being a slave to his original, should nearly as possible, confine himself to pruning luxuriances, correcting irregularity, rationalizing bombast, and elucidating obscurity; cautious of adding, unless where unavoidable gaps are made, and connection consequently wanting; it is most allowable that SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR very much wanted such assistance as we have mentioned.

TATE's opening of the play we apprehend preferable to that adopted by COLMAN; for the Bastard makes us much better, that is much more decently acquainted with his illegitimacy in the soliloquy spoken by him, than Gloster's account; the antipathy he bears to Edgar as standing before him, is also well intimated, and Lear's character is properly opened in the short following scene between Gloster and Kent, wherein also the former expresses strong resentment against his son Edgar, and warm attachment to Edmund, by whose cunning his passion is raised.

Where Lear divides his kingdom upon the childish principle of asking which daughter loves him best,

COL-

*King Lear.*

COLMAN has preserved that unjustifiable, cynical roughness, which SHAKESPEARE has stamped upon Cordelia, in the barren, churlish answer she gives her father ; this TATE has considerably softened, by making her attachment to Edgar, the cause of such reply : we think, however, that the whole affair might have been thrown into a much better light, by making the old monarch divide his kingdom on the marriage of his daughters, with those persons he approved ; Cordelia's refusing the person of his choice from a secret inclination elsewhere, would have rescued him from the extreme folly now chargeable against him, and the successful daughters might have made professions equally flattering from a seeming gratitude, as they now do from affected duty ; Lear's seeing into, and declaring a knowledge of Cordelia's attachment, would have furnished strong additional reason for Edgar's flight ; the rough, honest interposition of Kent, is a circumstance extremely pleasing ; in this, as well as many other scenes of the play, TATE has enervated the versification, by endeavouring to give it a smoother flow ; wherefore COLMAN has shewn greater judgment and more modesty, by only retrenching, not altering the original.

We can by no means agree with the last mentioned gentleman, that the love episode of Edgar and Cordelia is superfluous or uninteresting, we must rather contend in opposition to the frigidity of criticism, that natural and very pleasing sensations are raised by it, without any invasion upon the main dis-

stress of the piece ; to enter into a minute defence <sup>King Lear</sup> of this opinion, is not consistent with our plan, we only advance it for the reader's consideration and arbitration, appealing to audiences, as Mr. COLMAN in his preface has done, from whose feelings we imagine abundant proofs will rise in favour of what we thus take upon us to approve.

What Goneril and Regan say after Lear's departure, is judiciously omitted by TATE, as their characters are thereby unnecessarily, and too soon laid open ; his introducing the Bastard, in colour of friendship to Edgar, is also judicious, and lets us well into the scope of his design ; the following scene between Gloster and Edmund, however, he has mutilated abominably, by improper omission and pitiful versification ; the Bastard's excellent soliloquy he has strangely mangled ; nevertheless, we think, without losing any part of the spirit, Mr. COLMAN might have rendered the last sentence of it more delicate.

We can by no means conceive why Kent's first speech, when disguised, should have been curtailed ; as to the short preceding scene between Goneril and her steward, we deem it trifling and unessential, as what it relates to needs no such preparative, therefore, we commend TATE for leaving it out ; but we must immediately after censure his curtailing what the original author so happily penned for Kent and the King ; the introductory passages to Goneril's ill treatment of her royal father, are much better

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ter in SHAKESPEARE, than in either of the alterations.

As a comparative view renders it impracticable to trace the story in the manner we have done in other pieces, it will, we hope, be deemed allowable to remind our readers, that after improvidently parting with his all, abandoning his only dutiful child, and banishing his firmest friend, old Lear now presents himself before his eldest daughter, who, on mere pretence of injury, behaves with ungrateful insolence; here the king's natural impatience is justifiably wrought up, even to a bitter and pathetic execration of his undutiful child: though TATE had considerable merit in his transposition of the last scene of the first act, yet we think Mr. COLMAN has shewn more critical knowledge of nature and the stage, by restoring some passages which were omitted, and by concluding the act with Lear's curse, as nothing could be said after to any effect.

At the beginning of the second act, we find the Bastard, with most villainous hypocrisy, carrying on his design against Edgar's life, which Gloster credulously comes into; this scene is much better in COLMAN than TATE, as is the following interview, where Kent so characteristically catechises Goneril's insignificant Gentleman Usher.

The Duke of Cornwall and his wife Regan appear next, upon a visit to Gloster, whose misfortune in the supposed, unnatural behaviour of his eldest son, they condole, and offer their authority to punish the offender; Regan's laying a stress upon his being an

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 associate with her father's riotous knights, as she calls them, is a good opening of her intended behaviour to the good old king. Mr. COLMAN objects to making the daughters entertain a criminal passion for Edmund, but if we can once suppose them capable of filial ingratitude, all other vices, as Dr. YOUNG emphatically has it, may seem virtues in them; for this reason, we approve the intimation TATE has furnished Regan with, of her prejudice in favour of Edmund. When Kent and the Gentleman Usher appear, COLMAN has again judiciously preserved several passages which the laureat strangely slipped over, or wretchedly metamorphosed: we know not any scene written with more spirit and originality than this; Kent's honest, sarcastical bluntness, is finely contrasted to the courtly water-fly's supple nothingness; however, decorum is certainly intruded upon, for such language to be used in presence of a joint ruler of the state, is unpardonable; and we heartily agree that Kent deserves some punishment, but much regret so farcical an incident as a pair of moveable stocks, so conveniently placed in a nobleman's castle, as to be forth coming on the instant. Kent's going to sleep in such a situation is ludicrous also; we are amazed when alteration was on foot, this incident was not changed for one more probable, and equally conducive to the plot; especially when such a change might be made with the greatest ease imaginable. We have seen the Gentleman Usher make a very pantomimical stroke, by pushing at Kent when his legs are fast; such a manoeuvre cannot

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cannot fail of causing laughter, but are such violations of the fine feelings sufferable?

In Edgar's soliloquy, as altered by TATE, we find that he does not fly his enemies, as in COLMAN, from a paltry fear of the danger which hangs over his person, but from a generous, laudable motive of waiting an opportunity of serving the woman he loves, and who has made so great a sacrifice on his account; for this purpose he has resolution to put on the wretchedest appearance, and to encounter a situation worse than death: this places him in a degree of estimation with the audience, which otherwise he could not have obtained.

The stocks again present themselves to view, merely as an object of inflammation to the old king, who being already nettled, fires at the treatment his messenger has met, and indeed well he may, not knowing what personal provocation that messenger had given; the appearance of Cornwall and Regan brings matters to a pathetic and striking explanation; SHAKESPEARE, in this scene, has particularly summoned the amazing powers of his genius to exert themselves. The transitions of Lear are beautiful; from passion he falls to condescension and tenderness, mingled with grief; then flames again, while the two unnatural hags, as he justly calls them, alternately stab a dagger in his aged heart.

Mr. COLMAN, by sticking closer to the original than TATE, has an advantage in this scene, but is in our apprehension unpardonable, for omitting the following

lowing beautiful thought, suggested by *King Lear.* SHAKESPEARE, and thus commendably expressed by TATE.

The wicked, when compar'd with the more wicked  
Seem beautiful ; and not to be the worst.  
Stands in some rank of praise.

The old man's second condescension in what immediately follows should not have been neglected, as humanity therefrom feels a very affecting sensation ;

Now Goneril  
Thou art innocent again—I'll go with thee ;  
Thy fifty yet does double five and twenty,  
And thou art twice her love.

Concluding the act with the old king's exit, is so obviously right, that we are astonished SHAKESPEARE should have added so much phlegmatic stuff as he has done.

At the beginning of the third act, we find unhappy Lear shelterless, struck with phrenzy, wandering through a most tremendous storm, over a blasted heath ; without friend or consolation but what he finds in old faithful Kent, and the unhinged state of his mind, which renders him insensible of external injuries, though severe ; a number of beautiful, moral sentiments adorn his distracted ideas, particularly where he warns concealed guilt to tremble at elementary threatenings, and justly makes his own innocence a shield against fear.

As we have inclined to admit Edmund's intrigue with Goneril and Regan, so we approve his soliloquy, and the complimentary notices he receives from those

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those ladies ; Gloster's conference with him concerning a mode of relief for the old king, we prefer in TATE ; Cordelia is prettily introduced, and the sentiments she utters render her extremely amiable ; so material an object of the plot as she is, should not be left long unseen ; her filial duty is pleasingly displayed, and we wish that so meritorious a speech as what follows should have been overlooked by TATE, when he might have so much improved the acting merit of Cordelia, by putting it in her mouth ; it occurs in the first scene of the third act, as SHAKESPEARE wrote it, and displays a most fanciful picture of Lear's deplorable situation ; a few verbal alterations would suit it to the purpose we mention, and the introduction of it is recommended to any lady who performs Cordelia—Suppose it run thus :

Oh, Gloster, I have heard the poor unhappy king,  
Contending with the fretful elements ;  
Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,  
Or swell the curl'd waters 'bove the main,  
That things might change or cease ; tears his white  
hair,

(Which th' impetuous blasts with eyeless rage  
Catch in their fury and make nothing of )  
Strives, in his little world of man, t' outscorn  
The too and fro conflicting wind and rain ;  
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch ;  
The lion, and the belly-pinch'd wolf,  
Keep their fur dry—Unbonneted he runs,  
And bids what will take all.

The preceding speech is a poetical gem which most undoubtedly should not be lost, especially  
when



when it may be preserved with so much propriety. The great defect of SHAKESPEARE'S Cordelia is, that she makes too inconsiderable a figure; is too seldom in view, and has not matter for a capital actress to display extensive talents in. COLMAN has too implicitly maintained this poverty of character, and even TATE'S improvement falls short of what might have been; every alterer of SHAKESPEARE should remember, there were no female performers in his days, and improve according to the present time, such parts as necessity, not want of genius or knowledge, made him abbreviate.

Edmund's villainous design upon Cordelia fills up, but cannot blacken the character of a man who is savage enough to premeditate the death of his own father; and the circumstance is well conceived to raise a tender anxiety in an audience, for the safety of so dutiful and amiable a princess, whose pious affection makes her determine, amidst many perils, to seek for and cherish, that very father who has treated her with such unprovoked severity.

Lear and Kent again offer themselves to view; when it appears, that an interval of calmness, a ray of reason breaks in upon the former, who, after some very pregnant and affecting remarks upon his own condition, and the shocking cause of it—filial ingratitude; submits to the persuasion of his trusty follower, and consents to take shelter in a hovel. Their approach to this wretched refuge for distressed royalty, calls Edgar, in his bedlamite garb and expression upon the stage. It was a most masterly thought

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thought of SHAKESPEARE, to make the assumed madman cause an instantaneous return of Lear's frenzy : indeed, the beautiful distinction he has made between real and affected madness, cannot be sufficiently admired. In all Edgar's flights, we may plainly perceive a laboured diffusion of ideas, a methodical strain of images, and a studied wildness, adverting to no particular leading subject ; in the execution of this, our author has been amazingly successful, beyond imagination luxuriant. From Lear we have not a syllable but directs either to the original cause of his frenzy, or collaterally alludes to it. Among many other matchless beauties which occur in this scene, we cannot find words to express our feelings of the king's supposing that nothing could reduce nature to so wretched a state as Edgar's, but unkind daughters ; consequently that he, like himself, is an unhappy father : that speech which begins, " a serving man proud of heart," we deem inimitable ; as well as that of Lear, which follows it.

The incident of Edgar's saving Cordelia from the Bastard's ruffians, is not only as we think, defensible, but worthy of praise as a happy thought, and well calculated for action ; as is the princess's cordial and becoming deportment to her exiled deliverer, when he makes himself known. This scene ever has, and ever will have, except upon unfeeling, stoical criticism, a very engaging effect ; it enriches and recommends both the characters so much, that we must pronounce Mr. COLMAN's objection to it,

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as the whimsical offspring of judgment too squeamishly chaste; especially where, in his preface, he sneers at Cordelia's embracing the ragged Edgar. We are sorry for that gentleman's notions of love and gratitude, if he thinks they are confined to externals: if the princess, through false delicacy, had shunned Edgar, merely on account of his mean attire, she must appear unworthy the regard of him, or any other worthy man. The matter appears to us in so fair a point of view, that we are bold to say, if SHAKESPEARE, that competent and liberal judge of human nature, was alive, he would consider this addition as an ornament also. Critics upon the drama, should not only have good heads, but feeling hearts; if either requisite is wanting, we should chuse to spare the former, and try nature at her own bar, without Aristotelian legislation.

We heartily wish that the insignificant, cruel, offensive scene, where Gloster's eyes are put out, had been left to narration; the subject of it, while in action, is shocking, and Cornwall's scuffle with his domestic, ludicrous; both circumstances would have approached well in description, and so the stage would have been saved from very unbecoming transactions: however, both the alterers, through a reverence even for SHAKESPEARE's blemishes, or want of invention, have preserved what we thus object to.

We are not much pleased with TATE's first scene of the fourth act, where the Bastard and Regan are produced for no purpose, but for her to give him a picture, and for him to drop a note he  
has

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has received from Goneril, which latter proves a motive of jealousy. Mr. COLMAN's attaching himself to the original, and beginning with Edgar's soliloquy, is commendable. Gloster's contrition for the harsh usage of his dutiful son, and Edgar's pious concern for his father's situation, are pleasingly expressed: it is astonishing that what follows should be neglected by one alterer, and so mangled by the other; it is addressed by Gloster to Edgar, and is the conclusive part of a speech, the beginning of which is retained by COLMAN.

Heav'n's deal so still,  
Let the superfluous and lust-dicted man  
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see  
Because he does not feel; feel your power quickly:  
So distribution shall undo success,  
And each man have enough.

TATE's introduction of Cordelia, with Kent still in search of her father, is pleasingly imagined; what passes between them and poor, dark Gloucester, deserves approbation; and the mention of a popular rising in favour of the old king is well thrown in. Goneril's succeeding interview with her steward and the duke of Albany her husband, is much more explicit and satisfactory in COLMAN's than TATE's; it gives likewise more time for Edgar to change his frantic habiliments into those of a peasant.

In the next scene, the description of Dover cliff engages and gratifies taste abundantly; though making Gloster fancy he has fallen down such a precipice, is a bold, it is no unnatural stretch of imagination, where a mind is agonized like his by a com-

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 bination of painful and distracting events, and wishes to put a period to woe by terminating existence; splenetic persons we know, by a multitude of instances, conceive and credit as great absurdities; and why the mere matter of falling on the stage should be laughable we know not. Of this we are certain, that a Gloster, otherwise respectable, would never occasion even a critical smile; but Mr. COLMAN judges, perhaps, from some instances at Covent-Garden; and if these influenced him, he would have been prudent in cutting out three fourths of the part: besides, as the matter appears in his alteration, Gloster stands within a foot of the extreme verge of the cliff, yet upon hearing the king, whom he knows to be mad, he never mentions safer footing, nor ever after mentions the resolution of ending his life in such a manner. Now, in the original and TATE, there is a very good reason for not continuing such a determination; supposing himself preserved by a providential interposition, he resolves to bear his afflictions with a becoming resignation. If this incident was less defensible in point of probability, it gives so fine a warning against the worst of crimes, suicide, and inculcates so useful, so moral a lesson of bearing up under temporal affliction, that we cannot entertain any doubt of the propriety in retaining it.

Lear's madness is finely, though not quite so characteristically supported in this scene as in the third act. Though women have been the cause of his wretchedness, we wish what he says of them in the  
 speech

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speech that begins in both the alterations: "Behold yon simpering dame," had been totally omitted; it is, indeed, considerably softened from SHAKESPEARE, but as raising fulsome ideas is its only tendency, we wish it struck entirely out.

The encounter between Edgar and Goneril's gentleman-usher, we by no means like, it brings an unnecessary death upon the stage; the lady's attachment to Edmund, and murderous designs upon her husband, might have been discovered in a much more suitable manner.

COLMAN's beginning the fifth act with Lear upon his couch, is certainly better than making it end the fourth, as TATE has done: however, the scene is very much indebted to that gentleman for the merit we find in it; nor do we remember one of more affecting nature upon the single feeling of pity, Mr. COLMAN certainly did right to adopt it; we deem him also commendable for omitting the short interview between Goneril and an attendant, where she mentions the design of poisoning her rival sister.

By the Bastard's soliloquy, we find him in fresh designs of villainy; we do not see why Gloucester should be brought in merely for Edgar to leave him beneath a tree; however TATE has given him a respectable speech, which COLMAN, for what reason we cannot tell, has curtailed; eighteen lines furnish a better pause for the skirmish that is supposed than seven; especially when they are suited to the circumstances.

The

The turn of King Lear's being defeated is theatrically conceived ; from this point the alterers go pretty near hand in hand together to the catastrophe ; wherefore, we shall now only trace the following scenes in their succession, as TATE has ranged them : when Edgar disguised has given a challenge to his brother Edmund, we are presented with Lear, Kent, and Cordelia in prison, where a happy stroke occurs in the king's being overpowered at the discovery of Kent's being his trusty Caius ; though this scene is not very striking, it still commands attention.

The encounter between the two brothers is very spirited, and making Edgar the successful instrument of Edmund's punishment, is a pleasing instance of poetical justice ; we could have wished the ladies absent, for their contention about the Bastard, is rather laughable, this COLMAN has prudently avoided.

Lear, in prison, attended by his faithful daughter, again calls upon our feelings ; the attempt to assassinate him alarms human apprehension, and the happy effect of his desperation, raises a degree of satisfactory astonishment.

Edgar's approach with Albany confirms the royal prisoners safety, and different events fall in very naturally ; we must not only give TATE great praise for bringing about a happy catastrophe, by probable circumstances ; but, in point of justice endeavour to prove, that his distribution of the characters is much better than that in the original, or that in Mr. COLMAN's supposed amendment of the alteration.

That

*King Lear.*

That Lear, as a rash and rigid father deserves punishment is very obvious, this is sufficiently inflicted by his madness, therefore saving his life was undoubtedly just ; Gloster comes under the same predicament of blame, for pursuing even the life of an innocent son ; the ungrateful daughters deserve the rigour of justice, and could not fall more properly than by the barbarity of each other ; and the Bastard loses his life most righteously, by the hand of his injured brother ; Cordelia's piety merits the highest reward of temporal happiness, which TATE has given her, by a connection with the man of her heart ; the becoming a queen, through France's generous behaviour, as we do not hear of any previous attachment in his favour, cannot be deemed so delicate or adequate a compensation for her virtues, as bestowing her on Edgar, who is thereby also recompensed in a peculiar manner for both the love and loyalty he has manifested ; the old king's consent, with Gloster's and Kent's hearty blessing, shed a brilliance on TATE's last scene, highly pleasing to every good and tender mind ; it adds great force to the old king's restoration, and furnishes, to our apprehension, as satisfactory and compleat a catastrophe as any in the whole scope of dramatic composition.

We perfectly join in opinion, that Lear should speak last, but think Mr. COLMAN might have avoided the trouble of patching up a concluding speech, when that we find in TATE, preceding Edgar's, is sufficient without any alteration or addition ; it is matter of no little surprize, that the solicism of  
bringing



bringing Cordelia to view, as queen of France, without any mention of her royal consort, or any attendance equal to her station, should not have struck Mr. COLMAN's critical observation.

Upon the whole, we must remark, that in respect of the two alterations, TATE had no guide but his own judgment, which, though very fallible in many places, has yet operated successfully upon the whole; Mr. COLMAN had his labours, as well as the original to work upon, and has shewed great modesty in avoiding additions, considerable merit in restoring so much of SHAKESPEARE, but has certainly weakened the piece, both for action and perusal, by rejecting so justifiable, pleasing, natural and relative an episode, as the loves of Edgar and Cordelia; for the credit of SHAKESPEARE, TATE, COLMAN, and advantage of the stage, we wish an able critic, Mr. GARRICK, for instance, would undertake a *third* alteration upon medium principles, between the latitude of TATE, and the circumscription of COLMAN.

King Lear's character, as a man, we know nothing of, except from the concise picture of his being choleric and rash; there are no opportunities of displaying either virtues or vices; the impetuosity of his temper first makes him a very culpable father, and afterwards, mingled with pride, runs him into distraction; the unnatural cruelty of his daughters, renders him an object of pity, and SHAKESPEARE's irresistible genius has drawn him a character of admiration.

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To enter upon the representation of this odd and violent old monarch, is a daring flight of theatrical resolution ; a wide and various complication of requisites, are essential to placing him in a proper and striking point of view ; especially an imagination possessed of the same fine frenzy which first drew him into light ; his situations, sentiments, and language being peculiar, so must his tones, looks and gestures be, mechanical acting, which may pass agreeably enough in other smaller creations of the brain, must here flatten idea to a very palling degree.

Come forth the man whom nature has happily formed to animate with unrivalled excellence this her most favourite theatrical production—GARRICK come forth ! fearless of severest criticism ; we, who have singularly and repeatedly felt the most indescribable sensations from this gentleman's performance of King Lear, are obliged to confess, that had he pleased us less, we should have been able to say more ; there is a transcendant degree of merit which checks the boldest flight of praise, and here most certainly we have encountered it ; but the more danger the more honour—therefore, we rush fearless amidst an abundance of beauties, hoping we shall select, with some judgment, though satisfaction is bewildered with variety.

It must be remembered, that Lear is a monarch who, amidst the infirmities of age, has all the pride of royalty about him, and consequently aims at supporting external dignity, as far as the decline of strength will admit ; this natural struggle between

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vanity, and debilitation, is as happily displayed as possible, in the consequential feebleness of Mr. GARRICK's deportments ; strength and activity of spirit are by him most judiciously united to nerveless limbs ; in the sudden flarts of passion, you perceive the quick flow of blood giving momentary firmness to his sinews, which passing off, an increase of languor succeeds ; in his execration of Goneril, at the end of the first act, his face displays such a combination of painful, enraged feelings, as scarce any countenance but his own could describe, though so happily pictured that the dullest mind must conceive and feel.

In the second act, where he parlies between Goneril and Regan, who alternately reject him, rage and tenderness, suppressed fury and affectionate condescension, are mingled happily till the conclusive speech, where his breaks of voice, and variation of features, surpass the finest conception that has not been impressed by him, and leave those who have seen him without words to describe.

At the beginning of the third act, we plainly perceive the elementary conflict re-imaged in his distracted looks, while the eyes are also feasted by a succession of expressive, striking attitudes ; but a peculiar beauty is, the unparalled force with which he speaks, " Have his daughters brought him to this pass ;" and many other similar passages, which pass almost unnoticed from the mouth of every other Lear we have seen : in short, through the whole of the madness, he cuts competition short by most evident superiority. Through the fifth act, especially in

*King Lear.*

in the couch and prison scenes, his critical judgment, and happy powers, unitedly exert themselves with equal, though not such unparallelled success; however, where he says, "Pray do not mock me, &c." to Cordelia, and "Did I not fellow?" after demolishing the ruffians, we conceive his merit to reach beyond all expectation; after these faint outlines of excellence, so strongly felt by the heart, and so fully approved by the head, permit us, reader, to prophecy, that as no man will ever draw a character of more importance and variety than SHAKESPEARE'S Lear, so we apprehend no person will ever shew a more powerful, correct, affecting, original, and chaste piece of acting than Mr. GARRICK'S performance of him has done.

Mr. BARRY, with a commendable degree of ambition, entered the lists of competition, as we think, sixteen or eighteen years ago, and met with an extensive share of deserved applause; like a plausible, showy piece of painting, with fine tints, and a few masterly touches of the pencil, he entirely gratified some judgments, and for a while captivated those of more penetration; but, to carry on the allusion, when harmony of parts, and strict propriety of expression were minutely sought after, the piece lost great part of its effect, and sunk in value; in short, this performer, to whom nature was prodigally kind, in many requisites, wanted what his great competitor eminently possessed; we mean original perception; his acting, especially in Lear, was too dependent upon instruction, and presented

itself the offspring of a hundred different critical opinions jumbled ; it was very evident he felt more the ideas of his instructing friends, than what the author furnished him to say ; however, it is but justice to allow that he availed himself happily of friendly intimation, and was, in many parts of the first, second and fifth acts, truly striking ; nay, through the whole, he stood in high respect, unless when compared with much more capital merit.

We cannot help smiling to hear the sanguine admirers of Mr. POWELL, for many that excellent young actor had justly gained, say, that he was *near* as great as Mr. GARRICK ; one at first would suppose the expression ironical satire, but, as we believe some had persuaded themselves to believe it really was so, it becomes our duty, from the most impartial, and we hope liberal dissection of merit, to say, that his deserving sunk amazingly from a critical comparison ; his deportment was abominable, not a trace of majesty in it ; his transitions in the violent parts, wanted essential volubility, and most of his attitudes were injudiciously disposed ; in the tender strokes and feebleness of expression, especially those which occur in the first scene of the fifth act, he was excellent ; but, if most part of the third and fourth acts had been omitted when he performed the character, it would not have diminished satisfaction ; we allow him more nature, but less expression than Mr. BARRY, but place him far far beneath Mr. GARRICK in both.

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Mr. ROSS exhibits his usual and disgusting inequality remarkably in this part ; one scene deserving approbation, the next contempt ; in short, we deem it too ponderous a weight for his abilities to sustain with just grace ; Mr. DIGGES, whom we have somewhere mentioned, did some scenes of Lear, the madness in particular, great justice, but was rather tedious and unaffecting upon the whole ; we have heard, but hope it is not true, that the poor old monarch has suffered theatrical assassination from the relentless attempts of Messrs. QUIN and MOSSOP, who, we are confident, must have tortured every syllable of him.

Edgar, as drawn by TATE, is an amiable and interesting character, dutiful to his father, unsuspecting to his base brother, constant in love, steadfast in loyalty, resolute in danger ; Messrs. RYAN and HAVARD supported this character with great abilities, and with such parallel merit, that we hardly know how to grant a preference, yet are rather inclined to the former, as throwing more wildness of expression, and extravagance of action into the assumed madness : Mr. SMITH and Mr. REDDISH (particularly the latter) give considerable pleasure at present, and, we think, upon just principles ; the former, however, is injured as a performer by Mr. COLMAN's palpable mutilation of the part, in his alteration.

Gloster is a character of no conspicuous qualities ; the Bastard justly calls him credulous, and we are willing to consider him as a weak, honest man ; upon the stage Mr. SPARKE made him extremely respectable

King Lear.  
 spectable, and Mr. BERRY was not far behind : at present—oh heav'ns !—he is in the feeble hands of Mr. BURTON at Drury Lane, and incumbers the tottering abilities of Mr. GIBSON at Covent Garden. Do kind, condescending managers, relieve these overburthened gentlemen, by putting Mr. HULL and Mr. BANNISTER in their places.

Kent we admire as a worthy, undisguised, uniform miracle of a courtier ; bold enough to speak truth, where she seldom comes, in the presence of a king, and honest enough to follow that king's fortunes when deprived not only of his power, but even the common comforts of life ; the character is finely imagined, and happily introduced ; we don't remember, nor indeed don't desire to see it better sustained than by Mr. CLARKE, who hits off the cynical roughness well, and yet preserves the gentleman ; Mr. BRANSBY must excuse us, if we say, he rather puts us in mind of a reduced life-guard-man, than a disguised peer.

The Bastard is a complicated villain of the deepest die, performed with some degree of merit by the late Mr. PALMER, who had, however, too much levity of figure and deportment in him ; the present Mr. PALMER's appearance is much better, and his acting as well ; Mr. BENSLEY's idea of Edmund is just, and his expression adequate ; nor was Mr. CLARKE any way deficient in the representation of him.

The Gentleman Usher was formerly exhibited with a fund of exquisite whim by Mr. Woodward, and is pleasantly enough situated with  
 Messrs.

*King Lear.*

Messrs. DYER and DODD ; but set forth by Mr. CUSHING, he is the exact type of “ Coming up, sir, —Gentlemen, did you call—”

Goneril and Regan are characters infamously black, but not as Dr. WARTON seems to doubt impossible or even improbable ; for we have too many originals of filial ingratitude in real life, to verify such mimic representations of it. SHAKESPEARE’S strong painting, and placing the circumstances in the first sphere of life, may make the matter from apparent exaggeration dubitable ; but human transactions prove, in this point, as well as many others, what benevolent feelings reluctantly admit, and with great difficulty conceive.

In the light of female monsters, which undoubtedly they appear, it would be a coarse compliment to say any ladies looked or played them thoroughly in character ; therefore, we shall not criticise any who have appeared in the two elder sisters ; what they uttered has come no doubt against original feeling, and it would be rather cruel to try their merit in such disagreeable undertakings ; possibly no two were ever more unlike the barbarity they represent than Mrs. STEPHENS and Mrs. W. BARRY, nor any two more agreeable to the audience, under such ungracious circumstances : ungratefully cruel to a benevolent father, faithless to their husbands, and vindictive to each other ; all representation must fall short of what the author apparently designed ; and indeed we are glad that what must shock nature in the faintest view, cannot come forth with the addition of richer



richer colouring ; we also think, that such pictures <sup>King Lear.</sup> of the human species as represent a complication of vices, without one gleam of virtue, should be seldom shown to the public.

Cordelia is finely opposed to her sisters, and shines with double lustre from their darkness ; dutiful under severe provocation to the contrary ; firm and disinterested in her attachment to Edgar ; there is nothing extraordinary of acting merit in TATE's, and much less in COLMAN's ; in compliment to Lear, she is generally given to the first actresses, whether fit for her or no ; delicacy of figure, and tenderness of expression, are all the requisites which seem necessary for her ; Mrs. CIBBER was no doubt very pleasing, but during our remembrance too much of the woman ; as Mrs. YATES is at present, with the unsufferable addition of an imperious, uncharacteristic aspect : Mrs. BELLAMY looked the part amiably, but tuned the words most monotonously : Mrs. BARRY speaks and feels it extremely well, but rather outfigures it ; and we apprehend that very deserving young actresses, Mrs. BULKELEY—why is she so neglected by the managers ?—would render Cordelia more agreeable than any other lady now on the stage.

This tragedy, in its original state, exhibits a beautiful collection of poetical flowers, choaked up with a profusion of weeds, the unretrenched produce of luxuriant fertility ; and it was an undertaking of great merit to root up the latter, without injuring the former ; how far TATE, the first adventurer, and

*King Lear.*

and COLMAN, his supervisor, have succeeded, we hope the reader may collect from our animadversions.

The language of *King Lear* is of mixed nature, verse and prose ; where the former occurs, we find it bold, nervous, figurative, and, with some few exceptions, flowing ; the latter is compact, pregnant and spirited ; the characters are various, and mostly very interesting, well grouped to shew each other ; the plot is rather disjointed, and the scenes frequently intrude upon the unities of time and place ; but the catastrophe, so happily conceived by TATE, atones for all the unreformed irregularities ; and, we may venture to say, that from his hands the public have received a dramatic piece, which appeals so powerfully to the passions, that when performed with suitable abilities, it proves rather a degree of painful pleasure, and shrinks nature back upon herself.

In the closet it must furnish particular gratification to critical judgment, but will always be caviare to the generality of readers.



## M A N A N D W I F E.

A COMEDY by Mr. COLMAN.

**T**H E comedy we are just entering upon, is introduced like Mr. FOOTE's MINOR, by a prelude; but has had a manifest advantage of this in the propriety and force of action, by the author's *viva voce* appearance to represent himself; besides, it will appear, by comparison, that there was not only much more occasion for the one than the other, but a far greater share of executive power also manifested; we shall not draw a parallel, as every reader may do that at pleasure by turning a few leaves back.

Jenkins and Townly, the one a partridge-shooter, as he says himself, the other any thing you please, commence Mr. COLMAN's prelude with reading the bill of the play, which occasions one to ask, and the other to hint who the author is; when immediately the bard appears cloathed in mourning; obviously to excite two sensations, extremely consonant to comedy; grief for a deceased friend, and pity for the author's ticklish situation. However melancholy this sable figure made us when first exhibited, we cannot help smiling at the idea of introducing mirthful scenes with so melancholy an object; somewhat similar to a hearse preceding the lord mayor's shew.

But

*Man and Wife.*

But what is the purport of Mr. Dapperwit and friend's conversation: first, a facetious stroke upon Mr. COLMAN's singular good fortune in having annuities repeatedly bequeathed him; second, an unnecessary intimation of the loss sustained in Mr. POWELL, which the audience well knew without being so informed of the matter; third, a promise, which has not yet been fulfilled, of diligently improving public entertainment; fourth, a pitiful compliment to public good-nature; fifth, a most extraordinary defence of Mr. GARRICK's ODE, and a laborious, unintelligible assimilation of Mr. FOOTE's satirical wit to Fuller's earth, which we can reconcile no otherwise than in the following round-about matter. GAY says, "Gold is the true Fuller's earth to take out every spot and stain;" now as Mr. FOOTE's wit is universally allowed *sterling*, his brother manager caught the idea, perhaps, from thence.

The managerial parley sounded in this exquisite scene to sweeten Mr. GARRICK for anticipating his pageant, was very justly compared by a wag to the caresses of a prostitute, who, while she embraces her gallant, picks his pockets. As Mr. COLMAN is deemed, and indeed has proved himself a classical writer in general, we wonder how the following Hibernicism, among some other slips, could escape his pen: Dapperwit speaking of the pageant and masquerade, says, "Those you shall see Sir, and perhaps they may appear to more advantage, and be seen with more satisfaction at the Theatres-Royal than

Stratford ITSELF:" What liberal elegance of phraseology! ITSELF.

Having sketched this prelude, which by no means incurs the censure of being too witty; we are confident enough to pronounce the favourable reception it met, as an almost unparalleled proof of critical lenity: indeed, it contains such petitioning supplication, that mercy could not refuse her smiles, however impartial understanding was obliged to frown. As to the performance of Messieurs HULL, DYER and WROUGHTON bore up a dead weight of insipidity agreeable enough.

The first scene of MAN and WIFE, opens in a public house, full of that bustle and confusion which an overflow of company occasions: a gouty Landlord hobbles about, exerting his lungs though he cannot make much use of his feet; Luke the waiter's directions to his substitutes, and naming the rooms after SHAKESPEARE's plays, are pleasant enough; the introduction of Buck, and his conversation with the waiter, have nature and spirit; Snarl seems introduced for nothing but to complain of his bed; mention of the little army that walked over him, is not strictly delicate. After the departure of these three, fresh hurry is occasioned by the arrival of the Birmingham coach, which, as we are informed, has been overturned; from this incident some humorous remarks arise, especially those made by the sea-faring passenger, whose idea of flying, as it is called, conveys a whimsical effect. Indeed, all the passengers,

*Man and Wife.*

gers, though short, are well supported, and the Landlady's account of the jubilee is very laughable.

We do not much approve the stage coachman, who is drawn a civil creature, contrary to the well-known behaviour of such gentry: his hastening the passengers should have been in a more peremptory stile; when the other passengers are gone, we perceive colonel Frankly remaining; who, on being told the coach is setting off, declares he will go no further: from his soliloquy we collect, that a love-affair has brought him to Stratford, and that his mistress has reached it the day before.

Marcourt, a coxcomb of the current year, and rival to Frankly, now enters in the tip of the riding mode: his dialogue is pleasant, spirited and satirical; but we apprehend his intimate mention of Peers, with a very slight alteration, is borrowed from Clodio in the Fop's Fortune; the common affectation of riding, though scarce out of the streets; the journal of visiting on horseback, the sarcastical strokes against enormous club-wigs, Lilliputian hats, and some other peculiarities of the reigning fashion are humourously conceived and adequately expressed. The following stroke met with particular applause, and in a great measure deserved it, where Frankly says, "Do you intend to shew yourself as one of the characters of SHAKESPEARE." Marcourt replies, "No faith; such an original did not exist in his days." We agree with our author, that perhaps an exact similitude cannot be traced; but are not Ostrick, Lucio, &c. Marcourt's

*Man and Wife:*  
signed misinterpretation ; one finds fault with every article, and the other vindicates the whole ; till Cross at length repents coming to Stratford, which he justly calls a ridiculous journey ; but the lady maintains warmly her taste for fashion and consequence, which draws from her husband a stroke of well applied, useful satire, “ Because a countess, who has a room as long as Pall Mall, gets the whole town together at her route, you must have a route too, and squeeze all your company into two closets and a cupboard—nay, last winter, when the town run masquerade mad, you got a ridiculous party of fops and flirts to make fools of themselves, and called it a masquerade.”

Several other observations occur previous to mention of their daughter's marriage ; upon which, a fresh and material difference of opinion arises, which the author has thrown into well adapted dialogue, which at last rises into a state of natural, well-described aggravation, which Kitchen's approach opportunely checks a little ; immediately after, a message intimates, that Marcourt is come to wait on Mrs. Cross, this draws her off the stage, and leaves the two gentlemen to a tete-a-tete, in which Cross mentions, that he has taken such steps as may expedite his daughter's marriage with Mr. Kitchen ; it is a strange thought, however, for a father who has disposal of his child, and does not seem afraid of his wife, to take a house at such a time in Stratford, for a month, that his daughter, being a parishioner, may  
thereby

*Man and Wife.*

thereby have an opportunity of being married by banns, but we imagine a painful necessity in the plot called for this strange shift.

When Charlotte approaches we do not find her a sighing, despairing damsel, because parents design disposing her against inclination ; but a daughter of political finesse, pretending acquiescence on each side, that she may have the better opportunity of deceiving both : for this purpose she cordially closes with Mr. Kitchen and her father, but urges warmly the propriety of acting with secrecy ; this, Mr. Crofs, and the imaginary husband, come into readily : when the young lady urges that the jubilee affords a good opportunity for putting their scheme in practice, Kitchen throws out the following very sensible remark : “ Intrigues carried on in the face of the world, are always least liable to detection ; and now-a-days most people seem to act upon that principle.” After this, an assignation is made by Charlotte for Kitchen to meet her, when she has slipped on her masquerade dress, a blue Turkish habit.

When the gentlemen disappear, Charlotte speculates on the weight and intricacy of business which engages her attention : comparing herself to a minister who, under various appearances, attends to nothing but his own separate interest is well enough, but likening a young lady to the direction-post of a high road is certainly—excuse the pun, a piece of wooden wit.



That indispensable utensil in love-affairs, the chamber-maid, now approaches with intelligence that colonel Frankly is arrived, and has sent a letter by her, which she delivers. On being asked, if any person saw it delivered to her? she replies, No one but Sally, Charlotte's youngest sister; of whom she gives an arch description, just previous to her entrance; yet what the young lady says, when before us, we must pronounce much in the strain of mediocrity. She is curious indeed and forward, but utters nothing, that we can perceive, to raise a laugh or fix attention; her desire to be concerned in what she supposes mischief, is natural enough; and Lettice seems prepared to gratify that girlish inclination, but intimates they are not sufficiently abstracted from company. The proposition of Sally's telling a fib or two, is right servant-maid instruction, but when Lettice calls her *a little devil*, it is rather the language of a cook or scullion, than that of a waiting-woman; and there is an unpardonably fulsome idea conveyed in Miss Sally's knowing parody on Hodge's song of the *Sheep's head and Carrot*, without the least degree of humour, at least perceptible to us: thus strangely concludes the second act, which has so little spirit or business, that we find nothing commendable in it after Mr. and Mrs. Cross, except its brevity.

Five pages of the book, between the second and third acts, are filled with the order of that astonishing introduction the pageant, which has apparently as little connection with the general tenor of this

*Man and Wife.*

piece as any other, and seems only to have been an occasional device for skimming the rich cream of curiosity, which for a few nights of anticipation it certainly did with some degree of success ; but vanished quickly upon the appearance of that at Drury Lane.

Having thus had occasion to mention the JUBILEE, it becomes our duty to say, that a most extraordinary madness has this winter seized the London audience for repeatedly, in crowds, following near ninety nights, what will by no means bear critical dissection ; the real Jubilee at Stratford, if not politically intended as an introduction to what has since been exhibited here, deserves no better title than theatrical idolatry ; the mimic one carrying a wooden, or pasteboard representation of SHAKESPEARE about the stage in a kind of lord mayor's shew triumph, and pantomiming those excellent characters which he has so richly supplied with affluence of language and sentiment, is not only a mere money-trap, but a severe, though oblique satire also upon public taste, which hence seems more to enjoy emptiness, unmeaning parade than solid sense, or the noblest flights of powerful and luxuriant fancy.

It must be confessed, there is an agreeable dish of dramatic salmagundy dished up at Drury Lane, in which an excellent admirably performed Hibernian is the most high-relished ingredient, garnished with some very tolerable ballads ; that the characters are well disposed, and in dumb show tolerably well supported we also acknowledge, but that public appetite should feed

so long and greedily upon one dainty, <sup>Man and Wife</sup> is almost beyond the bounds of credibility ; and for managers to run it so enormously, as far beyond the bounds of justification ; for admitting there are fools and children enough to answer the end of such unparalleled repetition, what apology can be made to the many sensible, distinguishing friends of the theatre, who must either absent themselves half a season, or have this mummary imposed upon their taste and feeling, in conjunction with many of the feeblest worn out plays ; which have neither written or acting merit to go down, without some such popular sugar-plumb to sweeten them.

Oh SHAKESPEARE, SHAKESPEARE, what a spectacle art thou made ; how is thy muse of fire *cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd*, by such mechanical representation ; methinks, if thou wert alive again, the shallow justice who prosecuted thee for stealing venison would be sooner forgiven, than those who make thy great name a bait for gudgeons .

Having said thus much in warm sincerity against the very nature of what has so much engaged public attention, we must return to MAN and WIFE, only observing, that at Covent Garden the pageant was ill regulated, faintly represented, and insipid to the last degree ; however it eked out a piece not longer than some farces, to the principal part of an evening's entertainment ; though the author has since, with great modesty, reduced it properly to an after-game ; acting upon the same principle they are guided by in the royal dock-yards, that is of cutting

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ting down a ship of the line, when she does not navigate well, into a frigate.

At the end of the second act we had some small intimation of a plot in favour of Charlotte's marriage with colonel Frankly, and now at the beginning of the third, we find her prepared for the masquerade; while Lettice, the trusty confident, appears for the purpose of deception in the blue Turkish habit, which was mentioned as a signal for Kitchen. From what Charlotte says in this scene, we find that her Mamma, aiming at high life, has invited the masques to her house, previous to their going to the amphitheatre; and that from this circumstance, the amusing Marcourt and Kitchen must arise, while the young lady pursues her own inclination with the colonel. Sally's part is to make a fool, as she phrases it, of the beau, while Lettice plays upon the Turtle merchant.

Marcourt's approach hurries off Charlotte and Lettice, leaving Sally to play her part, who in a short soliloquy, professes great dexterity in the art of fibbing; and comparing her sister's lovers, inclines her approbation to the colonel: what passes between this sprightly young sprig of intrigue, in point of dialogue, is mere whip syllabub; much froth, very little substance. One turn of Marcourt's is well enough, when she throws out—not very modestly, some encomiums upon him: he says, “What a sensible little creature it is!” The scheme she has been taught to manage, is putting Marcourt upon a wrong scent, by suggesting that her sister is bent upon

upon deceiving him in favour of Kitchen; therefore advises strict attention to the lady in the Turkish habit. There is at the conclusion of this scene, a little stage-trick, of Sally's laughing, as Marcourt is going off, and when he turns to salute her, assuming gravity of countenance, which told extremely well in action, being happily executed.

Mrs. Cross and Lettice now appear: the former in high spirits, first from an idea of consequence in the masks assembling at her house, and next from a supposition that her favourite is sure of Charlotte; penurious extravagance and awkward elegance, are admirably touched upon in this speech of the city lady, "Have they stuck the ends of spermaceti in the Girandoles; and have you sent to the apothecary's for a sufficient quantity of Cream of Tartar to make Lemonade?"

Seeing some masks she goes off, and leaves Lettice to entertain the audience with a soliloquy of very little purport, and less humour; Kitchen comes forward, to whom the maid discovers herself, and imposes upon him an insinuation, that Charlotte's inclination is entirely with him, but that Mrs. Cross's prejudice in favour of his rival, makes a little policy essential; Kitchen also swallows greedily the bait of delusion, and is going post haste to meet his mistress near the great booth, but seeing Marcourt at hand, Lettice desires him to stay; upon the smart's entrance, a slight altercation, concerning the supposed Miss Charlotte, ensues between the gentlemen; Marcourt not only pressing by words, but using force to make

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make Lucy unmask ; she screams, which brings Mr. and Mrs. Cross, the former of whom reproves the forward gallant ; the spirit of contradiction between the MAN and WIFE now again exerts itself pretty briskly, concerning whether the lady shall unmask or no ; however, Lucy removes her concealment ; this surprises Cross, who asks for his daughter ; some confusion ensues, and from what Kitchen has privately intimated, he triumphs over Mrs. Cross's disappointment—Here a Mr. Fleece appears, who comes for the very purpose of telling that Charlotte is married to Colonel Frankly ; this Mr. Fleece, we find, was appointed agent to take the house to make Charlotte a parishioner, and to have the banns of marriage published ; but was imposed on by the young lady to act diametrically opposite to the inclination and intention of both her parents ; the unlucky rivals bear their disappointment with patience ; but Mrs. Cross threatens turning her daughter out of doors, which Cross warmly opposes, and to thwart his wife, says, he will receive them with open arms ; the happy couple appear next, and matters are agreeably compromised—One expression of Kitchen's we cannot pass unnoticed ; speaking of himself and Marcourt, he says, “ I have been roasted a little it is true, but not so much as my friend here—HE GOT INTO THE WHEEL AND TURNED HIMSELF ”—Oh glorious Hibernicism ! exactly parallel to Captain O'Blunder's expression of not being by when the taylor took measure of him for a suit of cloaths ; who ever imagined, before our author, that

a turn.

a turnspit puppy in office roasts himself—<sup>Man and Wife</sup> what pity that he did not add, to give the wit additional brilliance, and *basted* himself.

Upon a retrospect of this comedy, if it must be called so, we find the first act, at least the former part of it, animated by laughable bustle, tho' rather farcical, the latter is satirically pleasant; the second act begins agreeably, but is afterwards egregiously insipid: the third act consists of laborious intricacy, without nature to authorize, humour to support, or incident to gratify the suspense aimed at: the plot is founded upon a most pitiful device, and unravelled poorly. We find that the author seems unacquainted with canonical hours, which are precisely observed in marriages by publication of banns, nay, by licence, unless it be special; we are presented with two characters habited for the masquerade, and hear of others being come; is it probable that they could be thus prepared, when the forenoon was engaged as at the Jubilee, or indeed any where, for a masked ball before seven o'clock at soonest — yet Colonel Frankly and his bride just come from church at this time; though the matrimonial ceremony, under such circumstances as we mention, cannot be celebrated unless between eight and twelve in the forenoon; perhaps the author might have been led into this mistake, by entering the honourable state himself in the evening through special authority.

In point of character there is variety, but nothing very original; the dialogue is easy, and in some places spirited; the humour rather trite, yet entertaining;

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taining; and, as to the moral, we shall give Mr. COLMAN's words at the conclusion; "we derive, says Cross, speaking of his daughter's marriage, from this incident, one material piece of instruction, that no family can be well governed where there is a disagreement amongst THOSE who are placed at the head of it—and that nothing is so necessary as harmony amongst THOSE whose interests are so intimately connected as THOSE of Man and Wife," by the words particularized it will appear this sentence is not remarkable for elegance or compactness.

Mr. COLMAN, in a previous advertisement, has paid a genteel compliment to the performers for their *great* excellence in the representation; this, we think, extremely liberal, considering him in the double light of manager and author, though we could wish the word *great* had been omitted; indeed, we have heard his approbation interpreted differently; first as a design to recommend the house, second as a verbal bribe to engage the actors on his side, in the contention with his brother patentees, and last, to approve his own great talent in writing for, and adapting characters to the executive faculties of each performer; however, we are apt to interpret his praise more ingenuously, and shall justify in general the idea he thereby inculcates.

Cross is a peevish, silly fellow, who after his first scene, becomes mighty inconsiderable, and an insipid engine of the plot; Mr. SHUTTER being freer from grimace in this character than any other, is extremely deserving of applause; but we apprehend



the dryness of humour aimed at, would have found better support in Mr. YATES. *Man and Wife.*

Marcourt, by Mr. WOODWARD, has not, as we remember, one touch of Harlequin; his degagée pertness is admirably expressed, and no part that we have ever seen was better figured, or better dressed. Kitchen, who has more novelty and uniformity about him than any other character in the piece, fell most happily into the hands of Mr. DUNSTALL, through him nature articulated every line with agreeable unaffected humour; without grimace or fiffess of any sort, he sustained the author becomingly, and without one laborious effort gave every intelligent spectator singular satisfaction.

The Landlord, who could be little else than Boniface in the gout, was hobbled through well enough by Mr. MORRIS: Luke, the waiter, received great spirit from, and stood much indebted to Mr. LEWES, whose voluble and spirited expression rendered so short a part very conspicuous. Buck and Mr. DAVIS did not disagree, he looked the riotous Bacchanalian well, and expressed his inebriated state with some degree of pleasantry. Mr. WIGNEL tragedized Snarl so laughably, that, for the few lines he spoke, it becomes matter of great doubt, whether he was not the most comical personage of the drama. Mr. QUICK spoke the Hostler well enough, but was far too petit to figure such a character; Mr. BARNSHAW would have looked it exquisitely. Mr. FOX, in the first passenger, performed the ceremony of dispatching a  
2
toast

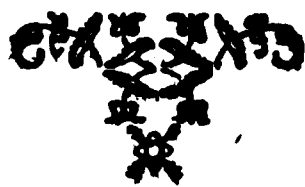
*Man and Wife.*

toast and some mulled wine dexterously ; nor was he at all amiss in delivering the blunt expressions put into his mouth. As to Mr. HERBERT, there surely never was such a lifeless fresh-water sailor seen before.

Mrs. Cross is as positive as her husband, but rather more silly and violent ; devoted with ideas contemptibly narrow, to a lavish imitation of persons in high life ; fond of what she does not understand, and opiniated of judgment she has not ; a perverse wife and indiscreet mother ; such are her outlines ; however, the picture is but very faintly finished, it received considerable animation from that correctness and vivacity which always distinguishes Mrs. GREEN'S performance of such characters. Charlotte is, considered in the theatrical view, as mere a trifle as ever hung heavy on the drama ; with just cunning sufficient to pick up a husband, and insipidity enough to set an audience asleep. Sally, her younger sister, is in no shape comic, except in some strokes where, considering her age, a charge of couched licentiousness may be brought against her ; she was performed with very considerable merit. Lettice sat easy enough on Mrs. MATTOCKS, but is such a chambermaid as never appeared before ; extremely eager to forward intrigue, without having any thing to do or say worth notice. The Landlady is well drawn, and had great justice done her by Mrs. GARDNER, whose capability is equal to much more material undertakings. As to the two female passengers, we have really forgot

them, and therefore avoid offering any opinion, as we would be equally tender of those who play one, as those who play ten lengths.

As a farce, MAN and WIFE may do on the stage after a Tragedy, by no means after a Comedy, and in the closet can never gain any degree of estimation.



Z E N O B I A.

## ZENOBIA.

A TRAGEDY. ANONYMOUS.

**O** Penning the drama with soliloquy, unless what the character speaks appertains peculiarly to self, we cannot entirely approve ; and what Zelmira offers at the beginning of this tragedy, we deem an unessential, faint, trite effort at description ; what she says to her husband Zopiron, concerning the havoc which ambition causes, is expressed in terms commendably humane ; a most hateful picture of Pharasmanes is given, and we are informed, that he holds in captivity a beauteous dame, distinguished by the name of Ariana, for whose virtue Zelmira conceives tender apprehensions ; the entrance of Zenobia is well prepared, by mention of the distress her mind appears to wear ; and her fainting under a load of sorrow when she comes in view, affects the tender mind : there is something pretty in her sense of obligation for the tender assiduity of her attendants, and their disinterested attachment ; but we think them very strange, very improper messengers to supervise and bring intelligence of the impending battle ; it must convey an Amazonian idea to suppose them capable of such a charge ; besides, Zopiron, who now disappears so oddly, might have either undertaken the matter himself, or recommended a proper messenger.

In

In the conference between Zenobia and Zelmira, <sup>Zenobia.</sup> Pharasmanes's brutal, bloody character, is set in a clearer light, by the direct charge of fratricide, in murdering Mithridates, an amiable monarch, whose virtues, exclusive of natural ties, should have secured him from such violence ; it appears too, that the tyrant illegally holds the crown of Armenia, given to his eldest son Rhadamistus by Mithridates : a crown Pharasmanes seized by force of arms, pursuing even the life of his plundered child. On Zelmira's charging Rhadamistus with the murder of his wife, Zenobia gives a nervous and pathetic account of the affair, from whence we learn that prince was sent when young to Mithridates' court, where an early affection grew between him and Zenobia, to whom he was married. At length, driven to despair by the unnatural rage of Pharasmanes, the royal couple determined to seek an asylum in death, for which purpose they plunged into the river Araxes ; in the transport of relation, Zenobia, known to Zelmira only as Ariana, slips out her real name, which seems to promise further explanation ; but the entrance of Tigranes, an officer and creature of Pharasmanes stops it.

The appearance of some captives strikes Zenobia with apprehension that the Romans have been vanquished, but Tigranes informs her they are only some persons who were intercepted going to the Roman camp, for which the king has sentenced them to be impaled alive ; the latter end of this line we think liable to objection,

They suffer death in *miser*y of torment.

The

*Zenobia.*

The word *misery* seems superfluously annexed to *torment*, as not tending to add any force, but rather furnishing a poverty of idea; there may be misery without torment, but there cannot be torment without misery. Upon viewing the unhappy objects of unrelenting tyranny, Zenobia tenderly recognizes Megistus, for whom she professes most friendly regard, as he does for her, and on the authority of being beloved by Pharasmanes, she takes him under her protection. This meeting is extremely well conceived, and the cause of her esteem for the old man judiciously concealed.

In the scene between Tigranes and Zelmira we are informed, that Teribazus, the younger son of Pharasmanes, loves Zenobia; a short sketch of that young prince's character is given by Tigranes, who afterwards drops a distant intimation of being himself a foe to Zenobia; here Teribazus presents himself, and makes kind enquiry of Zelmira for Ariana: Zenobia comes in upon his words, and enquires concerning the fate of war, when she is informed, that the king has condescended to treat of peace, and that an ambassador from the Roman camp is to have audience in Pharasmanes's tent; from this Zenobia cannot draw any presage in her own favour, however, proceeds to an immediate and warm intercession for Megistus, whom she calls *more than father*; she drops also some unfavourable hints of Tigranes's officiousness in the act of crimination; the prince, glad of an occasion to oblige the object of his affection, promises not only life but liberty

*Zenobia*  
 liberty to the old man, and reproves Tigranes with considerable asperity.

This desirable point gained, Zenobia's mental gloom appears for some time gilded with the enlivening rays of heart-felt satisfaction; in the full flow of her feelings, and to account for being so interested for Megistus, she reveals herself at large, and relates how the good old man rescued her, when floated far from Rhadamistus; rescued her just expiring, from the flood, and with her saved a boy of which she then was pregnant; the remainder of this scene, where she mentions living with Megistus, separation from her child, captivity with Pharasmanes, and the grief of her husband lost, is poetically pathetic, well calculated for capital action, without any strain or exaggeration of nature.

That dramatic writers, forty years since, when actors chaunted according to the flow of verse, paying more respect to harmony of expression than meaning, should tag their acts with those paltry unnatural clap traps, rhimes, is not at all surprising; but for a poet of this day to intrude them upon public taste, is what we could not reasonably expect, and must therefore blame in this play, especially those at the end of the first act, which are servilely similar to one of Andromache's speeches in the Distressed Mother; we have also an objection to speaking of spirit, in the stile of a distinct sex, when the most ignorant must know, that the corporeal composition only, admits such a distinction; the passage runs

*Zenobia.*

Till you shall bid this sad, world weary spirit,  
To peaceful regions wing *her* weary flight.

There is another line in this scene censurable, as being both in idea and expression exactly similar to a passage in Dryden's *Virgil*; *Zenobia*, speaking of her husband's fatal catastrophe, says,

— the last dismal accents

That trembled on thy tongue came bubbling up—

Speaking of a sea-nymph's departure under water, Dryden has it thus,

And her last words came bubbling up in air.

At the beginning of the second act, *Tigranes* presents himself ruminating, in a short soliloquy, upon some terms of reproach, uttered against him by *Teribazus*, which occasions him to declare resentment against the Prince, marking *Zenobia* also as an object of hatred; *Pharasmanes* approaches this ministerial tool of tyranny, and like the true man of blood, regrets that proposed negotiation from the Roman camp, has stopped the glorious havoc of impending battle; then enquires, whether the captives have suffered death according to his sentence; this gives *Tigranes's* malevolence an opportunity of accusing *Teribazus*, by insinuation of suspending their fate; thus he touches the monarch's impatience, who expresses himself in terms of severity against the Prince, just as *Zenobia* enters, who supplicates in pathetic terms, mercy for the captives; this suit, from an amorous inclination, *Pharasmanes* grants; the persuasion of one, and



the compliance of the other, are agreeably conduct-<sup>Zenobia</sup>ed in this scene; upon mention of Megistus, as a parent, the monarch proposes not only giving life, but raising him to a state of splendor, which Zenobia prettily declines.

Being acquainted by Teribazus that the Roman embassy is arrived, Pharasmanes, after hinting resentment to his son, and rhiming out a compliment to the lady, goes off to grant an audience; this gives Teribazus an opportunity of urging again his passion to Zenobia, which she admits with respect, but cannot return; the real cause of her coldness is well and naturally concealed; as it occasions Teribazus first to suppose his father is the happy rival, and afterwards leaves him strongly agitated with impassioned doubt; to say truth, the Prince is here pictured a kind of Drawcansir in love, ready to kill any and every body who dare thwart his darling inclination; when he seems left in a strange state of confusion, without a syllable of any consequence to say, Zopiron comes in and gives him a short account of the embassy, and of the senate's resolution concerning Armenia, which Teribazus supposing himself immediate heir to, rejoices at, and with some justice, though not strict filial duty, wishes his father's defeat.

One obvious point of enquiry arises here, how Zopiron should know what the Roman ambassador has in charge before the public audience has taken place; as he knows not that Flaminius is Rhadamistus, nor has had any previous conference with him:

*Zenobia.*

him : the general idea of peace is publicly known, but the reserved claim upon Armenia, Pharasmanes himself is not acquainted with, till made so by the ambassador.

Tho' it is something odd, that a representative of the Roman senate should enter upon private conversation with an unknown person, before he has fulfilled his public charge, yet, we find Rhadamistus, in his assumed character, unattended, joins Zopiron, to converse, as we perceive, upon very interesting matter in an open camp ; after asking for the monarch, he expresses himself in very indelicate terms of Pharasmanes, which is amazing in one who bears the olive branch ; whatever his thoughts might be, sure it must be deemed, not only impolitic, but highly censurable, to speak in such a manner before one who, for ought he knows, may relate it to the prejudice of his humane errand ; however, he accidentally lights on a most convenient person in Zopiron, who advises him to speak home truth ; this seems to awaken Rhadamistus's reason, which tho' he has already spoke in a most unreserved manner, he thinks not so well adapted to Pharasmanes's camp ; Zopiron's visage striking a favourable impression, he asks Zopiron's name and quality, which certainly should have been known before he had vouchsafed conference ; on being told that he is delegated to plead the rights of Armenia, Rhadamistus seems to have heard of him, and mentions his own real name without revealing himself.

F f f 2

Zopiron

Zopiron professing warm attachment to his lawful prince, though unknown, and even supposed dead, he receives information of the unhappy youth's being alive ; here Rhadamistus gives a strong, lively and affecting picture of his own wretchedness, and mentions Zenobia in a melting manner ; but, when the author throws him into a swoon, we are surprized at the misplaced extravagance of passion, which represents the prince rather as a child than a hero, incapable of checking that grief which unrestrained so palpably tends to set aside the disguise he thinks it necessary to wear ; besides, falling and grovelling about the stage on such an occasion, is rather a mean theatrical trick, than any flight of nature ; a kind of frenzy succeeds the fainting fit, merely calculated for action, without any trace of propriety ; from this Rhadamistus discovers himself, and relates his design of perishing with Zenobia, but that chance, and the humanity of some Romans, who had found him inanimate on the Araxes' banks, had preserved him to toil through a life of woe ; the assistance promised by Rome on knowing his real character is mentioned ; on hearing that the Armenians consider his brother Teribazus as heir to their crown, his grief makes a strange proposition of yielding to another what the Romans are generously endeavouring to recover for him ; in short, this scene, which concludes with a gingling resolution of scolding Pharasmanes, is extravagant in some parts, flat in others, and much too tedious upon the whole ; we think also,

*Zenobia.*

it might have been much more happily introduced after than before the first scene of the next act.

When Pharasmanes receives, on his throne, Rhadamistus, as the Roman ambassador, we find the former entertains most contemptuous notions of republicans. However, his expressions are tolerably decent till Rhadamistus, forgetting his peaceable errand, and indulging an ungovernable spirit of speaking ill-timed truth, offends him. The monarch, with great colour of justice, fires at reproachful accusations; and hence arises verbal contention, unworthy of, and disgraceful to private gentlemen, much more, such exalted characters. Pharasmanes, contrary to the law of nations, draws upon the brawling ambassador, and Rhadamistus urges his fury by an unlimited licence of expression. We much approve the following passage relative to Mithridates' death :

The hand of heav'n

Shook from the blasted tree the wither'd fruit,

But at the same time cannot help supposing it borrow'd from a much more beautiful one to the same purpose, spoken by Ægeon, in the last scene of the fourth act of OEdipus. The whole conference, now before us, is a most indelicate piece of political squabble, leaving matters nearly in the state they were before it took place.

Zenobia, and Magistus, now appear to discuss a tender point, the safety and situation of her infant son. Maternal anxiety, and faithful attachment, are pleasingly set forth. Impatient to see her child, Zenobia

*Zenobia*

nobia proposes flying from Pharasmanes's camp; but Megistus objects to the danger of such a measure, and prudentially hints that revealing herself to the ambassador of Rome is a more probable method of answering her purpose; the suggestion strikes her, and furnishes a fresh gleam of comfort. Their conversation is interrupted by Tigranes, who comes as messenger from the king, to know when Zenobia will make her royal admirer happy, by marriage; this rouses her indignation, which she vents in spirited terms. Her refusal is imputed, by Tigranes, to a prejudice in favour of Teribazus, which, however, she disclaims, and leaves him with some stinging observations on his own base character, which makes him, afresh, declare his intention of working her ruin. To him Rhadamistus approaches, who somewhat cooled himself, supposes the king's intemperance may, by this time, be moderated also. His sentiments are very pacific; but Tigranes assures him of vindictive resolutions upon the side of Pharasmanes; however, promises to convey the prince's humane sentiments to his royal master.

In a succeeding soliloquy, we perceive nature checking Rhadamistus, for waging war against his father, though a cruel one; apprehension of meeting, and perhaps destroying, an unknown brother, in battle, also shakes him: During this agitation of mind, Teribazus joins him; and utters, in his first speech, this strange accumulation of epithets, wherein the just gradation of climax is forgot;

A wretched, ruin'd, miserable prince

Besides

*Zenobia.*

Besides the dissonance of four *r*'s jarring in this line, what occasion, after telling us that he is wretched, is there for adding the word miserable ; but our author seems fond of this mode of expression. In the progress of this conference we are again, therefore, superfluously made acquainted with Pharasmanes's crimes, upon Teribazus's mentioning Rhadamistus with affection, though an unknown brother. Sentiments of tender nature arise ; and, as Flaminius, the latter proposes assistance to the former ; who however declares, that filial duty will not suffer him to assail, with violence, even a tyrannic parent. One material apprehension he mentions, that of losing the lovely captive, Ariana ; wherefore he requests Rhadamistus to convey her from the camp ; this favour is readily and cordially promised, with an intreaty, that Teribazus will also retreat to the Roman refuge ; this is declined, and he goes off to send the idol of his affection, while he watchfully prevents any interruption of her interview with the ambassador.

Megistus now leads on Zenobia, and a few lines are spoke before Rhadamistus fully perceives what object stands before him ; transported doubt, for some time, agitates him, after he has recognized her features and person, during which, she perceives, knows, and yet doubts also, the husband she has long thought dead.

These meetings are so frequent in tragedies, the Mourning Bride, Oroonoko, &c. that the author must possess uncommon abilities who strikes out any thing

thing new or more affecting than we have <sup>Zenobia.</sup> seen. Whatever possibility there is of working such an effect, we cannot compliment the piece before us, in that light; the prince, as usual, stands in an attitude, and the lady faints; besides, the incident hangs too long upon attention. When the faithful pair are realized to each other, Zenobia presents Megistus as the preserver of herself and child, upon which occasion, we think Rhadamistus too languid. How much stronger is the glow of love and gratitude in Oroonoko, who forgives even the villain who has kidnapped him, as being the means of finding his beloved Imoinda? Without forceable action this scene, especially as a child is in the case, is much fainter than any one we know, of a similar nature. Indeed, the poet seems conscious that his muse flaps her pinions heavily, by hurrying the act to a conclusion. Tigranes being seen, Rhadamistus goes off to meet him; Megistus briefly mentions the pleasing accomplishment of his prayers, in Zenobia's happiness; and she promises him singular regard. —Would she did not deliver herself in rhyme.

Act the fourth commences with the two princely brothers; Teribazus thanking Rhadamistus for his promised care of the captive, and warning him against any amorous impressions. This precaution occasions some dubious expressions to fall, which alarm the suspicion, and enflame the impetuosity, of Teribazus, who, nevertheless, cools upon being desired to continue the beauteous object within his amorous father's reach, and chusing rather to trust Ro-  
man

*Zenobia.*

man integrity, requests again the conductive care of Flaminius. Here Tigranes enters, and gives information that the king is approaching to have a private interview with the ambassador ; this sends off Teribazus, and the monarch soon appears.

After a few preparative lines, Pharasmanes mentions that Rhadamistus is alive, to Flaminius' knowledge ; therefore, demands his head from Paulinus the Roman general's hands. Here the tyrant, if possible, gives his character a deeper tinge of guilt ; and Rhadamistus, though in vain, expostulates with him on the principles of parental tenderness and general humanity ; these failing to touch his inexorable heart, the parley is broken off, and vengeance denounced on either side.

Pharasmanes, determined on the decision of war, resolves, during the intermediate hours of peace, to prosecute his impassionate purpose on Ariana, and asks Tigranes, if she has consented to make him happy ; on being informed of her peremptory, nay scornful, refusal, he declares, that love itself shall be his slave. However, a gleam of generous feeling shoots across the gloom of his dusky mind, and lights him to the milder path of persuasion ; for which purpose he orders Megistus, whom he supposes the father of Zenobia, to be brought before him ; the old man, at his entrance, speaks in the stile of hesitative apprehension, to which the monarch replies in terms of friendly profession, for sake of his imagined daughter. Speaking of the distress which



*Zenobia.*

preys upon Zenobia's mind, Megistus mentions an absent husband, long separated, as the cause of her woe. This alarms the monarch, who declares he will remove, by violence, such an impediment to his own uncontrollable passion ; and desires an immediate interview with his beauteous captive, ordering Megistus to conduct her, which charge he respectfully declines ; and when urged by Pharasmanes, with the glaring argument of royal splendor, he expresses himself in the following agreeable passage, which, without much originality, has yet some share of poetical and philosophical merit ; it might naturally flow from an humble station, yet it is by no means unworthy an exalted mind :

Oh ! not for me such splendor—I have lived  
 My humble days in virtuous poverty ;  
 To tend my flock, to watch each rising flow'r,  
 Each herb, each plant, that drinks the morning dew ;  
 And lift my prayers to the just Gods on high.—  
 These were my habits, these my cares.—  
 These hands sufficed to answer my desires,  
 And, having nought, yet nought was wanting to me.

Pharasmanes, ill calculated to parley with his own turbulent passions, contemns cool reason, and threatens the most fatal measures, if his desires are not complied with, leaving Megistus to ruminate thereon. The old man might have been furnished with an excellent soliloquy ; and, indeed, one of eight or ten lines seems necessary to place the exit of Pharasmanes, and the entrance of Zenobia at a proper distance from each other ; as it is, she treads upon the heels of incensed royalty. The princess hurries off

*Zenobia.*

off her faithful guardian, appointing a place of meeting, that suspicion may not arise from their being seen together. Teribazus enters, upon the old man's departure, and renews his suit to Zenobia, which she interrupts, and overturns, by a most unaccountable declaration, that the idol of her love is in the camp. Nay, upon further question, she still more surprisingly, and we may add inconsistently, declares, without reserve, Flaminus is that rival. From what precedes, it would seem as if she had interested the prince to recommend her flight to the Roman camp under care of the Roman ambassador. That flight being ready for execution, how is it possible she should, so palpably, strike out the means of prevention; nay, even the hazard of, either discovering Rhadamistus, or, subjecting his life to danger, from a tempest of jealousy raised in his brother's breast. Yet, such is her conduct; and Rhadamistus, entering upon the discovery, is justly accused by Teribazus. The dilemma Zenobia has reduced herself and husband to, is manifest, as in this bungled scene she speaks but two lines and a half, and those with little or no meaning.

Teribazus, though almost frenzied with rage, so far remembers the sacred character of an ambassador, that he postpones his resentment to the next day's battle. This is polite, and generous; but how can we account for his leaving the woman he loves with a professed rival, who is, as he knows, going to quit the camp, and has his own request, to take the fair one with him. How to reconcile

such contrarieties we cannot tell, and suppose no-<sup>Zenobia</sup> thing could urge an intelligent author into them, but the utmost distress and penury of plot ; or, an implicit compliance with Mr. Bays's maxim, that to elevate and surprize is eligible at any rate.

Soon after Teribazus goes off, Zopiron enters, and hastens the departure of Rhadamistus, with Zenobia ; who scarce disappears, when Pharasmanes, with his obsequious Tigranes, approach. The monarch declares his intention, of abiding the event of war, and sends for his son, Teribazus ; to whom, on his appearance, he urges an accusation of giving countenance to his foes ; this the prince denies with becoming spirit and respect. On a second charge, of thwarting his father's amorous inclination, he disclaims any attachment to Zenobia, and points out ambition as the present ruler of his heart. Tigranes, who was dispatched to see that the Roman ambassador had left the camp, returns ; and informs Pharasmanes, that Zenobia and Megistus are fled with the ambassador : This rouses the tyrant, who orders a pursuit ; which point of service the irritated Teribazus takes upon himself, considerably in the Quixote stile ; not in respect of words, but the inconsistency of the behaviour. To say truth, there is a laughable mixture of consequence and weakness, rage and childishness, set forth in the monarch also ; whose conclusion of the act is as much below the temper of mind, he has hitherto shewn, as possible.

*Zenobia.*

At the commencement of the fifth act, Pharasmanes presents himself to us, in a state of agitated reflection ; jealousy and vengeance fire his imagination, to a desperate resolution, when Teribazus brings him the agreeable intelligence, that he overtook, and has, after faint resistance, made prisoners the fugitives. They are brought on chained, and sustain, with becoming fortitude, threats of a sanguinary nature, from the enraged monarch. Rhadamistus throws out a hint to his brother, that he will repent the forward zeal which has brought them into such a situation. Teribazus, wild with resentment, having heard Zenobia declare the supposed Flaminius her husband, treats his brother with disdain, and vows eternal hostility with Rome. Rhadamistus, pleading the privilege of his station for safety, is answered by Pharasmanes, that he has forfeited all title to respect and protection. Zenobia remonstrates, in favour of her husband, with force and feeling ; which rather seems to precipitate his fate. Nothing can be more languid than Rhadamistus's behaviour through this whole scene ; when dragged off to execution, his wife softens into supplication, and, on Pharasmanes's declaration, that her compliance with his amorous desires, is the only path to mercy, she very pathetically offers her infant son, as a plea for milder treatment ; finding the monarch inexorable, she gives full scope to the distraction of grief : here Teribazus appears, and seems disposed to sooth her, notwithstanding he has been the cause of the pungent woe, she feels.

On

*Zenobia.*

On the hint, that Flaminius is his brother Rhadamistus, Teribazus entertains strong and natural surprise ; and, with a great deal of justice, asks, why so important a secret was kept from him ; on Zenobia's answer, which contains but a weak apology, the prince resolves, affectionately, to save his brother, for which purpose he goes off. Zenobia, however, does not draw any favourable consequence from this unexpected turn ; but seems to think her husband's fall is inevitable ; which melancholy reflection is confirmed by Zopiron, who brings intelligence, that Rhadamistus is leading forth to execution ; this, very alarming crisis, inspires Zenobia with a desperate remedy, which she hastens to put in practice ; but leaves the audience in doubt what it may be.

Rhadamistus appearing guarded, Teribazus joins him, and enters into a private conference. The explanation of affinity gives the former a fine opportunity of manifesting fraternal tenderness, by granting unlimited forgiveness to the person who has effected his ruin. Indeed, the picture he gives of his own disingenuous policy is a powerful exculpation of Teribazus, and places him in the fairest point of view that their conduct and circumstances will admit. However, his brother, on the proposal of a rescue, even at the expence of their inhuman father's life, shews true filial dignity, most amiable persevering tenderness, in rejecting the idea of preserving his own life, and even his love, by the sacrifice of a parent. Tigranes, with a fresh sentence from Pharasmanes,

*Zenobia.*

Pharasmales, orders the guards to plunge Rhadamistus into a dungeon, where his generous brother determines to attend him.

Tigranes, in a short soliloquy, after the princes are departed, seems to plan great matters for himself, but is so much the embryo of a villain, that we scarce know what to make of him ; Zopiron now appears with a suspension of Rhadamistus's sentence, by order of the king, and, as he says, the queen ; mention of the queen surprizes Tigranes, from whose enquiry we find, that Zenobia has consented to be, and actually is, by a very short ceremony, the wife of Pharasmales ; Zopiron's account of the transaction, has some share of merit, and gives to critical perception a gleam of the catastrophe.

When the royal pair are discovered, the monarch expresses himself in affectionate terms, while Zenobia's words wear a cold and mysterious gloom ; on soliciting freedom, and safe conduct to his friends, for the Roman ambassador, Pharasmales's impetuous, brutal temper kindles, and mention of an interview makes him not only reverse the pardon he so lately granted into a fresh order for immediate execution, but also treat his unhappy bride with the most severe indignity ; till at length by the operation of poison he has drank from his nuptial cup, his feelings are changed from rage to agony ; Zenobia's triumph at his approaching fate, is most certainly founded in justice, and affords an excellent transition in acting, but we must contend that it favours rather too much of masculine ferocity, especially

cially in those lines of exultation she speaks after Pharasmanes dies. <sup>Zenobia:</sup>

Upon the entrance of Rhadamistus, freed from captivity and danger, he flies with rapture to the embrace of his beloved Zenobia ; who seems, like Romeo, to lose awhile the remembrance of poison in rapture ; Rhadamistus in one line pays the tribute of filial sorrow to an unworthy father, and the next moment warmly applauds Zenobia for the virtuous action of murdering him.

When Zenobia feels the deadly draught working in her veins, some pathetic strokes occur, but so inferior to those of the last scene of Romeo and Juliet, which they evidently, though faintly resemble, that comparison shews them in a trifling point of view ; our heroine's conclusion would lose much of its effect but for the mention of her child : Rhadamistus is very feebly supported for his circumstances, and making the impetuous, hot-headed Teribazus, amidst such a scene of confusion, woe, and the disappointment of his own heart, draw the cool, moral inference which the author fixes from his piece, seems rather a compliment to the performer, than strictness of propriety, which would have given the conclusive speech to Megistus, or rather Zopiron, as the character least interested, consequently fittest for speculative remarks : the six lines of rhyme are also as impoverished jingle as ever we met in any decent piece.

The unities of this tragedy are well preserved, there are some surprizes, and many interesting events  
in

*Zenobia.*

in the plot, which is well conducted for stage business; the versification is neither elegant nor flowing, however, by rising very little above measured prose, it has no taint of bombast; the sentiments are trite, yet in several places happily applied, and we readily admit, that there are many strong appeals to the tender passions, inasmuch that we know several pieces much more poetical and correct, which cannot draw so many tears; what light it shews human nature in, and how the great purpose of instruction is fulfilled, we shall discover by an investigation of the characters.

Pharasmanes is one of the most compleat, royal villains we remember to have met with, capable of crimes thoroughly atrocious, without one generous feeling; his love is evidently sensual, his same barbarity; the sanguine slave of ambition, with every other hateful, turbulent passion; he moves before us, from beginning to end, an object of consummate detestation; the author, intending to exhibit nature in a state of the utmost depravity, has well fulfilled his design. As to the acting of this obnoxious monarch, there are opportunities of exerting considerable talents to advantage, and we imagine Mr. Mosson's executive powers might make him a very conspicuous character, while Mr. AICKIN stands deficient both in dignity of deportment and extent of voice, which latter defect is rendered more palpable, by a laborious wildness of exertion, by vain, uncultivated attempts; in short, he reminds us of an unbroken steed, which is constantly upon the grand



paw, without any grace or propriety of motion ; a little restraint would throw him into more agreeable regularity, and mend his paces much. *Zenobia.*

Rhadamistus is an honest man and tender husband, in point of filial respect also he is commendable, but as to heroism he cuts a very poor figure, being, as is apparent, timorous and disingenuous : in these failings he seems to be a mere tool of the plot, which greatly depends in its present form on his censurable conduct. The part was indisputably written for Mr. BARRY, whose performance happily sustains the author, wherever he has done justice to himself ; but as many of the scenes manifest great inequality, we are not to be surprized, that capital abilities in such places, should so far border on insipidity as to pall ; one third of this character omitted in action, would render him more interesting to an audience, and more advantageous to the performer.

Teribazus, we may justly stile, the squib and cracker of tragedy, possessing an undisguised, generous and affectionate heart, yet precipitated by a violent degree of fretful impatience ; there is an oddity of composition in this impetuous prince which Mr. HOLLAND delineated with masterly execution ; his transitions were rapid, and his expression forceable ; that power of voice which on many occasions he was too lavish of, here operated pleasingly, and made sound literally an echo to the sense.

Mr. PALMER appears in the situation of an unskilful rider on a high mettled horse ; the part runs away.

*Zenobia.*

away with him, and he is as near tumbling heels over head as possible. We wish, from real regard to this rising performer, that he would, before habit takes too strong possession of him, clap a check rein on his expression, for it is a strict, critical truth, that being under is better than over the mark, and that many natural deficiencies are softened by a prudent limitation ; spirit should enliven, but not wage war with propriety.

Megistus is a very amiable personage, humane and parental in his attachments, humble in desires, and resolute in danger ; we think the poet might have made him much more considerable, however, as Mr. HAVARD, far in the decline of life, was designed for the part, it was probably adopted in point of length and feelings to his impaired faculties ; it is certain, that gentleman did him great justice, a tender, sensible placidity of countenance and expression, gave the sentiments due effect.

Mr. JEFFERSON, who has taken possession of the old man, does not affect us so much as his predecessor, though neither languid nor disagreeable.

Zopiron seems little more than a filler up of the drama, he appears to possess some virtues, but has no opportunity of exerting any, and what he says, through the whole play, is of so little significance, that we are surprized Mr. PACKER can walk thro' him without setting the audience asleep ; this is one of many makeshift characters which, if totally omitted, would occasion little or no deficiency.

Tigranes seems to be a thorough paced pupil of tyranny, ready for all the dirty work his master can suggest, teeming with mischief, which, however, he cannot bring about. Mr. HURST does him no injustice, except by a Mossopian pomposity of utterance, which hangs too much about him in every character he performs : we think proper to intimate, that every imitative performer is sure to catch the defects of that person he aims at, much sooner than his beauties ; and, as the latter, at second hand, grow much fainter, so the former rise to a stronger degree of disgust.

Zelmira is as water-gruel a character as her husband Zopiron, and affords no opportunity for cutting a conspicuous figure ; being no more than a foil, she cannot rise above the agreeable, and this Mrs. W. BARRY reaches.

Zenobia engrosses more approbation than any other character ; as a princess, wife and mother, she commands our applause ; her situations are well varied, alarming and interesting ; we heartily concur with the author, that Mrs. BARRY gives her many additional charms, that her action is a kind of Promethian heat to the princess, and that we have not lately seen so strong a degree of passion and pathos exhibited.

This tragedy, with adequate performers may, nay must always please on the stage, but as to private perusal, we think it will afford very little pleasure, and less instruction.

## C Y M O N.

A Dramatic ROMANCE. ANONYMOUS.

**T**H E title of this piece prepares us for an invasion of critical rules, being professedly in the extravaganza strain, we are to consider it as a child of unrestrained imagination, rather than the offspring of nature and propriety ; what has been already objected to ghosts, spirits, witches, &c. even decked by SHAKESPEARE'S luxuriant fancy, must lie much more forceably against the enchanters and enchantresses of inferior pens ; but while public taste shews such an unaccountable eagerness to encourage sound and pageantry, it is not wonderful, that authors and managers should throw out the most propable bait of folly, by calling any sort of monsters to their aid.

Merlin and Urganda, two persons possessed of supernatural powers, open the first act ; from their conversation, it appears, that the former has entertained a passion for the latter, without meeting a suitable return ; he charges her with loving Cymon, and upon her prevaricating, urges her having stolen that prince from his father, in search of whom an hundred knights are employed. What is a romance without knights ?

By

By what Merlin says, Urganda instead of fulfilling her appointed trust, which was to guard the peace and innocence of the Arcadians, has sunk them into folly and vice ; here a song occurs, founded on that most hackney'd thought, that an impure fountain must produce tainted streams, and so of ill examples from a throne.

Merlin, proof against the solicitations and representations of Urganda, declares revenge against her, and in the mysterious language of a conjurer, says, that Cymon's cure shall be her wound ; this alarms the enchantress's apprehension, she ponders on his words, when her attendant Fatima appears, who seems to form dreadful ideas of Merlin's displeasure, and urges her mistress to avoid impending ills, by marrying him ; this her attachment to Cymon prevents, from which several pleasant remarks on female weakness arise, and Cymon's state of idiotism is set forth at large ; the inequality of magick to the power of love is tolerably well explained in a song we meet here.

Among other spirited remarks, we think what follows deserves quotation, " 'tis the business of beauty to make fools, and not cure them ; even I, poor, I could have made twenty fools of wise men, in half the time that you have been endeavouring to make your fool sensible ;" on seeing Cymon at a distance, Fatima proposes to retire, but Urganda desires her assistance to divert him, and in a song, very like all others which relate to enchantment, invokes not only her attendant spirits, but the power  
of

*Cymon.*

of music to influence him ; here the prince appears, clouded with melancholly, a conversation ensues, wherein many lines are spoke, yet very little is said ; Urganda soothes, and Fatima rallies the simple youth, who answers with such dubious insensibility, that no direct inference can be drawn through five pages ; in order to waken his feelings, Urganda shews him a delightful prospect, of which Cupid and his suite make a part ; however, the blind god owns his inability to conquer Cymon, and seems rather nettled at being called on such a fruitless errand.

Cymon's falling asleep, amidst exhilarating entertainment, is a powerful proof of dulness ; on being awakened, he expresses a desire of going, and makes a pretty allusion, in song, of his own case to that of an encaged linnet ; at length, Urganda, by way of working on his gratitude, grants him liberty, and gives him a magical nosegay which cannot create, but is capable of improving passion ; he receives both with a kind of puerile joy, and concludes the first act with a song on liberty, very much in the namby pamby strain, but well enough for a simpleton.

Two shepherdesses present themselves at the beginning of the second act, one in full fret at being forsaken, the other offering conciliatory advice ; Urganda's fruitless passion, though an enchantress, is mentioned ; from further explanation, it appears, that one Sylvia is the object of jealousy, as her beauty,

beauty seems to be an object of general admiration<sup>Cymon.</sup> among the rural swains; after a very womanish resolution of making her as uneasy as possible, deriving pleasure from her pain, the sisters are accosted by Linco, a merry blade, who gives a specimen of his disposition in a spirited song. His contempt of sighing lovers is well expressed; his contrasting of Sylvia, who shuns gallants as industriously as other girls follow them, is also pleasing; Linco's second song is not a bad receipt for disengaged peace of mind, but as to the poetry it is as moderate as may be.

Upon being told by the angry shepherdess that his prescription wont effect her cure, he thinks her case deserves only to be laughed at; in a few lines further he mentions, that Sylvia has seduced Damon her sister's swain; here the scale is turned, and she who preached patience, being now touched herself, breaths terrible threats; at length, both females are so disconcerted at Linco's light treatment of their serious concerns, that they go off and leave him to enjoy his laughter in another song, which has more spirit than poetry, more sound than meaning.

Merlin next appears, and in soliloquy acquaints us, that he has sown the seeds of mutual affection between Sylvia and Cymon; by a touch of his magical wand he communicates to a basket of flowers, the power of inspiring the heart with love, then goes off uttering the same line concerning Cymon's cure he pronounced to Urganda in the first act; soon

*Cymon.*

soon as he disappears, the simple prince approaches with his bird, to which he determines giving liberty, having obtained the like happiness himself. On seeing Sylvia as she lies reposed on a bank, he confesses astonishment, and in a speech of much natural simplicity, gives us to understand, that new sensations have entered his mind; the air he sings is in a suitable stile, and affords very good opportunity for action.

Sylvia's waking occasions a very pleasing and confident interview; her song is pretty, and the astonished hesitation between her and Cymon has an agreeable, natural, effect; but is rather too great a similitude to that of Hypolita and Dorinda in DRYDEN'S TEMPEST.

The progressive explanation of their artless passion is very happily conducted; her giving, as a token of remembrance, the nosegay enchanted by Merlin, and his exchanging that presented him by Urganda, are well conceived incidents for continuing and embarrassing the plot. The duet, which concludes the second act, turns upon a fanciful application of inconstancy to fading flowers, which charm the senses for a short season, and soon grow obnoxious.

Urganda enters with her confidant at the beginning of the third act, making enquiry after Cymon; and is again rallied by Fatima for so eagerly pursuing such worthless game. We apprehend this convenient lady's scheme for making matters easy, by



the enchantress's marrying Merlin and retaining <sup>Cymon</sup> Cymon as a gallant, is too licentious: Besides, Merlin must be as little of a conjuror as thousands of his neighbours, not to find out his own cuckoldom.

Cymon's rapturous entrance with a nosegay occasions a very apt mistake in Urganda, which is, that the young man has at last conceived a passion for her, according to her wishes; hence she conceives the most agreeable sensations, and on the conclusion of a very rapturous air, which he sings, comes in his view; at sight of so hateful and terrible an object, conscious too of the danger her resentment is pregnant with, he endeavours to hide Sylvia's nosegay; and when Urganda urges an explanation of the change that appears in him, he prevaricates, till being forced to shew the flowers, the enraged enchantress discovers her mistake, and by dissembled mildness makes enquiry how he came by the present; Fatima causes him to slip out that it was given by a female, while Urganda, to make vengeance more sure, not only stops further inquisition, but gives transported Cymon full liberty to follow his own inclinations; however, after he goes off, she discovers very vindictive feelings, and having ordered Fatima to watch his motions, makes her exit with a song of furious import.

Sylvia now appears, at the door of Dorcas's cottage, with Cymon's present in her hand. In a soliloquy and two airs, she confesses singular satisfaction, somewhat mingled with occasional doubt.

Linca

*Cymon.* Linco listens while she is singing, and pays a delicate compliment, not only to the harmony of her voice, but the innocence of her disposition. She is rather startled at Linco's overhearing her private thoughts upon such a subject; he acquaints her, that she is to appear before the deputy governor, to answer some complaints which have been lodged against her by a shepherdess; however, he promises his friendly assistance. Ignorant of any crime, but that of being too handsome, she readily consents to attend his summons.

Dorcas, a deaf old woman, in whose care Sylvia had been left, appears, and expresses several jealous apprehensions concerning her charge; but upon Sylvia's apparent willingness to go, and Linco's promise of protection, she agrees. The old woman's affection is well described, and, from what she says, Sylvia's identity appears doubtful. Dorcas's song on the danger young inexperienced females stand exposed to in these days, compared with the time of her own youth, is truly humorous: However, we doubt whether there ever was an age of absolute general constancy in love; but satire makes it a rule, to prefer things past to the present.

Dorus, the magistrate, hearing a shepherdess, and promising redress of her complaint, is next produced; his worship, in a very few lines, exhibits amorous inclinations, which the female, either through fear or cunning, seems to favour, artfully introdu-

cing Sylvia's name; against whom, being wound<sup>Cymon</sup> up by the present complainant, he utters severe threats. Linco entering while Dorus is kissing the shepherdess's hand, protests against prejudiced favour; and, to corroborate his argument, sings an air pregnant with good sense as well as humour, which the magistrate seems nettled at, and the shepherdess intimates, that Linco, being a friend to Sylvia, is her foe; this occasions the magistrate to insist upon Sylvia's immediate appearance. The interruption given him by Linco, who at least goes out for the supposed culprit, is whimsical; here the shepherdess departs with full and warm assurances of protection.

There is something extremely well imagined in making Sylvia's charms instantaneously strike the old son of vice; for certain it is, that he who makes justice give way to one set of features, will also make her subservient to another that has more force, or novelty. He attempts questioning with authority, but is unable to abstract his ideas from her beauty; consequently, utters himself in very incoherent sentences. This scene is conducted with particular pleasantry. At length, Linco advises Sylvia, by way of making her cause more sure, to sing; this she complies with, and so powerful an effect is wrought upon the overwhelmed Dorus thereby, that he throws off all disguise, and expresses himself in the tenderest terms; at which critical point of time the shepherdess re-enters,

*Cymon.*

to enquire if sentence is passed; this nettles Dorus, who answers fretfully, but promising to speak with her in the justice's chamber, sends her off; then renews his professions of favour to Sylvia, with which, and a spirited song by Linco, the third act concludes in a very pleasing manner, as suspense is judiciously sustained, and the humour well varied.

Urganda, hurricaned with violent perturbation of mind commences the fourth act; and, after a soliloquy, or rather incantation, raises a dæmon of revenge; who, like a very complaisant fiend, ecchoes his mistresses purpose in a song, which calls up some of his infernal associates; after performing certain mystical rites they follow the enchantress.

Linco draws in Damon and Dorilas by force, charges them with being jealous of Cymon and Sylvia, which makes them so forward to carry that helpless fair before Urganda; upon being rallied severely by Linco, and pinched rather too close, the shepherd seems to hint as if he could not exculpate himself to the governor for such behaviour; however, the laughing blade seems to treat such an apprehension very lightly; and even when Dorus personally orders him to join in the search for Cymon and Sylvia, he makes several very ludicrous evasions, jesting even in the face of authority; this irritates the magistrate to dismiss him, and, in return, he gives Dorus a severe rub, as never doing justice, but in conformity to his inclinations, or passions; in obedience to which also he sets her at defiance. The

lofs

loss of his place sits easy on this disengaged humourist, who seems to think, as matters stand, it is of little consequence. We apprehend his song points at our political disputes for some years past, however, they are touched with a very gentle hand.

Fatima now appears upon the watch for Cymon, in obedience to her mistress's orders; Merlin comes upon her, and on account of her mischievous errand, determines to punish her. The conjurer being invisible, he very conveniently hears what this female spy remarks concerning Cymon and Sylvia; his changing what she has written to letters of blood, and quite a different purport from what she intended, gives a good opportunity for descriptive action. On seeing Merlin she confesses strong fear, and soothes his compassion in pitiful terms; this he will grant on one condition only, a positive injunction of silence, which Fatima seems to think, as nine tenths of the female world would do, a terrible tax upon loquacity; however, according to the trite proverb, that needs must when somebody drives, and upon Merlin's persuasion, she consents, as a defeat to Urganda's curiosity, to answer no otherwise than by the monosyllables ay and no.

On the Magician's departure, in his dragon-drawn chariot, the terrified waiting woman descants on her deplorable situation in soliloquy, and seems to think his cruelty, in taxing the tongue so unmercifully, is without precedent. A song upon the words she is confined to, carries her off agreeably.

Cymon

~~Cymon~~ Cymon and Sylvia now come forward, and renew their vows of constancy with much fervour. Upon her hinting apprehension of Urganda, he fortifies her spirits with Merlin's promise of assistance. The air, sung by Sylvia, which we may call *the sweet passion of love*, is in the true pastoral strain, and does not want poetical merit either in versification or sentiment.

While Cymon and Sylvia are interchanging mutual endearments, they are beset, on every side, by Dorus, Damon, Dorilas, and a parcel of their mirmidons, who first taunt, and afterwards attempt to take them prisoners; this enflames Cymon to resistance, he repels force by force; but while he is pursuing a part of the runaways, others of them, with Dorus at their head, surround Sylvia, who is hurried off by them to Urganda; Cymon returning, perceives the loss of his mistress, and utters his anxious feelings in an air bordering upon frenzy.

At the beginning of the fifth act, we meet Urganda and Fatima; the former glowing with curiosity, the latter labouring under Merlin's limitation of speech. The enchantress tries interrogation in every shape without being able to obtain a satisfactory answer; from whence the scene has some humour, but is indisputably too long. Fatima is at length dismissed by her enraged mistress, to whom Dorus enters, who meets but a rough reception till he mentions Sylvia; the thoughts of having her in captivity soothes Urganda, she enquires after Cymon,

Cymon, and being informed that he could not be taken, she determines to glut her <sup>Cymon's</sup> resentment on the unhappy object of his love; for which purpose, she first dooms Sylvia to death, but on second thoughts changes her sentence to confinement in the black tower, one of her enchanted castles.

The innocent victim appears, is threatened and shewn the gloomy spot of her destin'd captivity, which she looks on with becoming intrepidity, and sings an air which turns on this pretty, instructive, though common thought, that innocence is an impregnable shield against the most gloomy terrors of fate; as they are forcing Sylvia to the tower, the dreary prospect, by means of Merlin's superior power, changes to one of comfort and magnificence; this strikes the defeated enchantress with shame and terror, she tries her wand, but finds its power blasted, and is ridiculed by her triumphant competitor. A flourish of martial music is heard, which causes her to enquire the meaning of it, to which Merlin replies that the hundred knights sent by Cymon's father, in quest of him, have been drawn together, and are preparing to grace the nuptials of Cymon and Sylvia; he reminds Urganda, that her ill treatment of him has counteracted all her schemes; however, he shews some dawning of pity for her fallen state, which she contritely thinks herself unworthy of, then breaking her wand retires with a just remark, that power abused deserves to be so annihilated.

Here

*Cymon.*

Here a grand procession of the knights is introduced, and indeed the execution of this pageantry on the stage is equal to any idea we can form of such an affair ; but from this, and many other pompous attractions thrown out to catch public curiosity of late years, we are under a necessity of remarking, that such luxury of show, indicates a lamentable decay of taste : when the eyes usurp the place of, or too much influence the ears in dramatic exhibitions, judgment is reduced to a deplorable state of servility ; however, this is criticising rather unfairly, while we review a piece founded upon magic ; in that light the author of *CYMON* has been remarkably modest, and introduced as few monstrosities as possible.

After the procession, Merlin gives a kind of nuptial benediction to the happy lovers ; a chorus is sung to Merlin's praise, after which, Linco recommends humourously the old proverb, be merry and wife ; this brings on alternate singing, with intermingled chorus's by the several characters, and so ends the romance.

We have already hinted that our bard, upon so imaginary a plan, might, if he would, have overleaped the bounds of criticism, nature and probability, much more than he has done, without any violent apprehensions of censure ; as to the stile, all supernatural agents are insipid, except those written by SHAKESPEARE, therefore, Merlin and Urganda cannot be supposed to utter any thing much worth notice ; indeed, they sometimes entertain us with



rhyme, which we grant unnatural enough, but their <sup>Cymon.</sup> prose would do as well for any other personages.

Upon the whole, we cannot greatly applaud our author for purity, tho' we allow him spirit of stile, nor say much for novelty of sentiment, notwithstanding, it must be admitted, he has made good use of some established maxims; his plot has not much intricacy, yet is pleasing, the scenes are placed in tolerable succession, and if there are not the most poignant strokes of humour, there is little danger of attention's drowning.

The songs might have been much better, or considerably worse, mediocrity is the most impartial character we can give; notwithstanding a moral was very little to be expected from a piece of this kind, yet we find one both pleasing and instructive, which is, that persevering innocence need not despair under the most apparent and terrifying difficulties, of finding effectual assistance; that power, derived from evil principles, is of very fallible and perishable nature, and that unspotted virtue is the most valuable possession of life.

In respect of the characters we find Cymon by enchantment a fool, and by the same means restored to a state of sensibility; Mr. VERNON, who has singular merit as an actor, supports him in both situations with commendable ability.

Merlin is as good natured a conjuror as ever we have met, however, his interposition on the side of distressed innocence, does not proceed so much from sympathy, as from jealous resentment conceived against

*Cymon.*  
gainst Urganda, for preferring Cymon to him in the ideas of love; hence such favourable events arise as render him an amiable agent; what he says or does, requires very little force of action, he depends upon plain, level, declamatory utterance, and stood so far respectable in the hands of Mr. BENSLEY, yet we think him considerably improved by Mr. BAN-  
NISTER.

Dorus is a good, because too true picture of such magistrates as hold justice in the leading-strings of their own passions, and wind her about as caprice or interest directs; his amorous inclination throws him into laughable circumstances, and Mr. PARSONS's performance of him sustains the author's intentions most happily; it is considerable merit for action to keep equal pace with the writing; but to heighten it as the gentleman now before us does in this part, deserves a greater stretch of praise.

Linco is a character of great vivacity, uniformly pleasant from beginning to end, not only agreeable from the aptness of his expressions, but from their animating, benevolent tendency; upon this view it is not to be wondered that Mr. KING should dilate the brows of severest criticism, and obtain the pleasing tribute of general applause; we dont recollect a more disengaged, chaste piece of acting, and tho' we dont pretend to determine musical merit, yet we are bold to assert, that the songs of Linco come with as much meaning and entertainment to the ear, as airs in their stile possibly can do.

The Damon of Revenge has only a song, which <sup>Cymon.</sup> we apprehend Mr. CHAMPNESS executes much to the satisfaction of his hearers ; the Shepherds are so inconsiderable that to praise or censure the performers of them would be a waste of criticism.

Mrs. BADDELEY has merit in Urganda, but has too placid a set of features, and too melodious a voice for the passions and gloomy sentiments of such a part. Mrs. SCOTT, though inferior, makes a tolerable shift in the enchantress.

Fatima is composed of spirited archness, and is supported with a very capital degree of pleasantry by that excellent comic actress Mrs. ABINGTON ; we apprehend, if the author, instead of the trifling upon yes and no, had thrown a kind of amorous intercourse between this character and Linco, both parts would have received considerable addition, and two performers of general estimation, would have been presented to the audience in a more striking light.

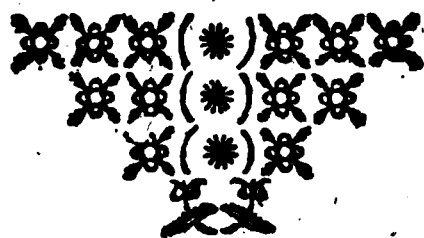
Sylvia, though she did not absolutely die with Mrs. ARNE, has fallen into very evident consumptive symptoms ; not but we allow Miss RADLEY merit, both as an actress and a singer,

The Shepherdesses cannot be in better hands than those of Miss REYNOLDS and Miss PLYM, nor is Miss BURTON unworthy favourable notice in one of them at present. Mrs. BRADSHAW, in Dorcas, fills up the author's idea, and gratifies any expectation spectators may form.

This romance was certainly intended as a mere theatrical representation, and as such it affords very agreeable

*Cymon.*

agreeable entertainment ; as to the closet, it can only amuse very young, or very weak minds, on each of which the notion of enchantment must work a prejudicial effect, and therefore we cannot justly recommend it to perusal.



## C A T O.

A TRAGEDY. By Mr. Addison.

**T**H E moral tendency of all Mr. Addison's works, the strength of expression, the harmony of versification, the purity of sentiment, and the affluence of idea, which so eminently distinguish his productions, have stamped great estimation on his name as an author ; perhaps his independent circumstances and station might to the obsequious or ignorant add some lustre : were we to judge of the play now before us by the complimentary copies of verses which precede it, we should naturally presume it one of the most correct and amazing efforts of genius ; yet, Mr. Dennis, a bold and laborious critic, undertook to point deficiencies in every scene, and though his remarks wore in general the appearance of snarling, yet many of his strictures, and those very severe ones, were indisputably just ; his review, however, we have not been able to procure a copy of, and retain but a very slight recollection of it, therefore what we offer will neither incur the censure due to his apparent malevolence, or rob him of any praise his ingenuity may deserve ; we shall trace the piece as we have done others, not hunt after trifling slips, nor, on account of a great name, slip over material ones, we confess an exalted idea of the author, but will not be blind to his faults.

Cato

*Cato.*

Cato commences with Portius and Marcus, the former coolly and the latter impetuously lamenting the perilous state of their father and their country, they are both furnished with observations worthy of great and patriotic minds, but Marcus diminishes much by introducing his amorous passion when matters of so much deeper concern claim attention, and Portius disgraces his dignity by mean dissimulation; the advice he gives Marcus is worthy a philosopher, but when we consider it springs from a desire of weaning him from the object of his own affection, it sinks under the denomination of plausible artifice; thus the elder brother becomes less an object of estimation in this scene than the younger: on the appearance of Sempronius, Marcus retires to prevent his mental agitation from being discovered.

Sempronius not immediately seeing Portius, hints at a conspiracy, but goes to no point of explanation, as the youth catches his eye; under a previous profession of dissimulation, he speaks as a son of Liberty, mourning her approaching fate: a fine compliment to Cato occurs, that of his virtues rendering the penurious and shattered remains of Rome's senate awful; it is astonishing why our author should have blended so much love with a subject so foreign to it, yet Sempronius mentions his passion for Marcia, as does Juba sometime after, so that there are four swains employed in sighing even while Cæsar is at, and ready to storm their gates. Portius indeed justly mentions, that it is a most unfavourable season to court his sister, and goes off with a spirited resolution

resolution of encouraging the soldiers to fulfil their <sup>Cato.</sup> duty as Romans.

On his departure Sempronius, in soliloquy, gives us to understand, that he expects Syphax, a Numidian chief, to grant him assistance in matters of mischief; then informs us, that Cato's refusal of Marcia to his wishes rouses resentment, and thence intimates a design of giving up Cato to Cæsar; Syphax's appearance brings this point to further explanation, the Numidian general declares his troops ready for a revolt, but at the same time acknowledges and laments Juba's firm attachment to the virtuous Roman; Sempronius, however, urges a fresh trial to bring over that young prince. We admire Mr. ADDISON's idea of hypocritical patriotism, where on the principles of deception he makes Sempronius speak thus :

I'll conceal

My thoughts in passion ('tis the surest way)  
I'll bellow out for Rome and for my country,  
And mouth at Cæsar till I shake the senate;  
Your cold hypocrisy's a stale device;  
A worn-out trick—Wouldst thou be thought in earnest  
Cloath thy feign'd zeal in rage, in fire, in fury.

He goes off to cultivate a spirit of mutiny amongst the Roman soldiers, and leaves his friend to work, if possible, upon Juba; the young prince immediately appears, and taxes Syphax with looks of gloomy coldness, desiring an explanation; the old man, in a short, blunt reply, throws a sarcastical charge on, and disclaims Roman dissimulation; this draws from Juba a liberal compliment in favour  
of

Cato.

of his allies ; in return, Syphax enters into a spirited comparison of Numidian worth, but confines himself to martial excellence, while Juba very sensibly contrasts the moral and social virtues ; this warms the rough impatience of the old general, who gives his expression such scope, that the prince is under a necessity of giving a check, which stomachs the veteran, and causes him to try the pathetic, by making mention of Juba's dying father ; afterwards he touches upon Juba's love as the foundation of his other attachments, and paints the superior charms of those beauties who may be met with in his own court of Zama, but the royal youth most sensibly returns, that his regard is fixed upon internal not external merit ; here Marcia and Lucia appear, which causes Syphax to retire, execrating the former, as being conscious that a smile from her can overturn all the power of his persuasion.

The intercourse between Juba and his mistress we deem extremely insipid, the lady indeed judiciously reproves her lover's whining at such an interesting point of time, and sends him off to more material concerns with becoming resolution ; Lucia, who seems to have softer and less noble ideas than Marcia, upbraids her with giving the *good-natured* prince, as she oddly styles him, such treatment : Cato's daughter, however, manifests great good sense in proceeding upon the principles of self-denial, rather than effeminate the public cause ; Lucia confesses herself unequal to such fortitude, hence arises a discovery of her attachment to one of Marcia's bro-



thers, which, on enquiry, proves to be Portius; <sup>Cato.</sup> this makes Marcia commiserate and plead the cause of Marcus, Lucia confesses great perplexity between the two lovers, which Marcia strives to soften by a friendly and pious observation, that present sorrow under celestial influence, may lead to future happiness. She concludes the act with a very beautiful simile, harmoniously, but unnaturally expressed in rhyme.

Act the second introduces the Roman senate in expectation of Cato, who, after a few prefatory lines appears. In his address to the senate, he informs them with just dignity of sentiment, how affairs stand, and observes the necessity, from Cæsar's near approach, of determining upon defensive or submissive measures: Sempronius, according to what he mentions in the first act, delivers himself with all the impetuosity of a zealot for liberty, he draws an irritative picture of past transactions, and concludes with a bold figure of being called to vindictive measures by the mourning shades of departed citizens.

Cato, in return, with political, as well as philosophical moderation observes, that impassioned arguments and resolutions are seldom founded in reason, and that those who are intrusted with the lives of fellow subjects, should avoid waste of blood, upon principles of false fame; the opinion of Lucius runs in a mild and pacific turn, which occasions Sempronius to drop a malevolent insinuation against him; however, Cato maintaining a just equilibrium

*Cato.*

of deliberation, draws a just and instructive line of distinction, between an overheated rapidity of opinion, and a frigid coldness ; wisely observing, that though it is necessary to avoid romantic rashness, it is incumbent on brave men and free spirits to use with becoming intrepidity, all those means which providence has put into their hands ; from what he says, resistance upon prudential and virtuous principles, seems to be his resolution, which he closes with a glorious observation upon the intrinsic value of uncorrupt liberty.

Being acquainted by Marcus that an ambassador from Cæsar demands admittance, with the senate's concurrence, he orders the admission of Decius, who greets him in friendly terms, and is answered with a most elevated reserve, where they only appertain to himself ; but with much forceable and expletive dignity where public concerns are touched upon.

Through the whole of this admirable interview, our hero throws aside the paltry consideration of self with princely contempt, and his spirited terms for the good of his country, outstretch all praise ; the author has also contrived to sustain Decius in so agreeable a light, that it requires almost stoical firmness not to think with him, that Cato's unshakeable perseverance is rather too rigid, and that he speaks more in the stile of conquest than unequal competition.

Upon the departure of Cæsar's representative, Sempronius is forward to thank Cato for his resolute conduct ; and takes an opportunity of being

rough with Lucius; for which he receives an elegant reproof from Cato; seeing Juba approach the senators retire, when a short interview succeeds between that prince and Cato, who tells the Numidian what resolution the senate have taken; after approving what he hears, Juba, by a diffident round about method, makes absurd mention of Marcia; to which her father replies with keen and suitable brevity, leaving the lover in a state of astonished perplexity.

In this condition of mind Syphax finds his royal master, and artfully tries therefrom to work up the passion of resentment, for which deep purpose he soothes his vanity with praise, and again recalls the idea of his father, then comes plump on the object of his affection, pointing out a way to make her his in spite of Cato, which expedient we find to be carrying her off by force; this Juba rejects with laudable and consummate disdain, giving Syphax some very severe and just reproofs for so unworthy a proposition; these warm the old man into expressions improper for a subject, and Juba is in consequence irritated so far as to give him the stinging appellation of traitor, a term which awakens his caution, and warns him of having overstepped the bounds of prudence; this indiscretion he endeavours to repair by humble concession, which not taking immediate effect, he most artfully disclaims all approbation of the scheme he proposed, and says the design of carrying off Marcia by force, was only suggested to palliate the pains of his prince's love; this

works

*Cato.*

works happily on Juba's tender, unsuspecting nature, and the practised politician worms himself into an additional degree of confidence, by speaking in high terms of Cato's precepts and example; falling into this trap of deception, the prince offers kind reconciliation, and withdraws; however, Syphax, in a short soliloquy, points out the difference of age and youth with respect to affronts, and resolves upon an entire attachment to Cæsar.

Sempronius's entrance brings on further explanation, and upon Syphax's enquiry how Cato deports himself amidst surrounding perils, he receives the following answer, replete with poetical beauty.

Thou hast seen mount Atlas  
When storms and tempests thunder on its brows,  
And oceans break their billows at its feet;  
It stands unmov'd and glories in its height.

There never was a finer idea struck out of a great man remaining unshaken, amidst many violent assaults of frowning fortune. Syphax mentions the impossibility of gaining Juba to their side, to which Sempronius makes a kind of ludicrous reply, and the design of gaining Marcia for him occurs; upon comparing notes they seem to think every point of the prospect favours their design; as an assistant to the Roman mutineers, Syphax promises that the Numidians under his command shall be ready at the moment, and he draws a most fanciful similitude between the storm of sedition, and those overwhelming whirlwinds which often rise in the African deserts; nothing can be more elegantly expressed, but

but the jingle is very offensive to criticism founded <sup>Cats.</sup> on nature.

The third act opens with Marcus and Portius conversing upon the love affair, which we have already condemned as a very censurable intrusion upon the dignity of this piece.

We find Marcus, as at the beginning, overheated with passion, and Portius endeavouring to mitigate him; the former deposes the latter to be his advocate, to solicit Lucia's favour for him; this the latter attempts to decline, and seems to feel some touches for playing a double dealing part, however, he dare not speak openly, therefore, upon Lucia's appearance, is left by his brother to plead the cause of his love; and how does he do it? by advising the lady to act as hypocritically as himself. This, however, she generously declines, and vows not to enter the nuptial tie with Portius, however warmly inclined thereto, while such family affliction is likely to flow from their union. This resolution alarms the impatient feelings of Portius, who charges the fair one with coldness, and exclaims in terms frantically inconsistent with the idea we have hitherto formed of his character. The lady's fainting is a most laughable circumstance, and the whole scene, which ends as it began, is such a laboured, unfinished aim at unessential passion, that we heartily wish it annihilated.

When Lucia retires, Marcus comes forward to enquire his fate, and forms an explanation of it from the confused countenance of his brother. This interview

*Cato.*

Interview is made up of as strange and uninteresting materials as the former, nor can we think how the author could have carried them off with any grace, had not a martial symphony roused their attention; it is some plea in favour of the young heroes, that love has not totally enervated patriotism, but that, as Portius observes, they are warmed to action by the trumpet's voice.

Sempronius having ripened his mutineers to action, now appears at their head, encouraging them to persevere, this is promised; when Cato enters, with philosophic fortitude he questions the mutineers concerning the motives of their base conduct, and rates them with irresistible proofs of their ingratitude; Sempronius, who perceives their spirits sinking, curses their timidity, and when Lucius recommends their contrition to Cato's mercy, urges severest execution, evidently to screen himself; however, Cato declining every trace of cruelty, dooms them to death in the mildest manner, observing, with great propriety,

When by just vengeance guilty mortals perish,  
The gods behold their punishment with pleasure,  
And lay th' uplifted thunderbolt aside.

When this matter is settled, and Cato goes off, we perceive the mutineers have considered Sempronius's behaviour as calculated to deceive Cato in their favour; however, they find, too late, that their imperfect, dastardly behaviour, as well it might, has fired him to the most eager resentment, and are carried off to meet an ignominious fate. Indeed,  
they

they are the strangest instruments of sedition we have ever met, and seem to be introduced for no other reason than to give Cato two or three good speeches, and to insinuate, that his awful presence was sufficient to look men out of their lives. *Cate.*

This scheme being rendered abortive, Syphax enters, tells Sempronius that his Numidian troops are all mounted, and advises an attack upon the gate where Marcus holds watch, by seizing of which, they may gain Cæsar's camp; here Cupid interferes again, and reminds Sempronius, that Marcia is left behind; this difficulty started, Syphax, like an adept in the arts of intrigue, as well as those of political treachery, proposes carrying her off, and for prosecuting this matter with more certainty, promises to furnish Sempronius, not only with the habit of Juba, but his guards also, by means of which he may gain easy access to Marcia's chamber; this delightful masquerade scheme, so consistent with tragedy, and this in particular, is highly relished by Sempronius, who draws from it the most favourable omens of success, and concludes the third act with a pompous, high-flown assimilation of his projected adventure to the Rape of Proserpine.

The two ladies favour us with their appearance at the beginning of the fourth act; Lucia still complaining of her wonderful perplexity, reminds Marcia of her similar situation, between Juba and Sempronius, but places those lovers in a faint point of view when compared with her inimitable Portius: it is true, love will be partial, but need not be made unpolite.

*Cato.*

unpolite. Marcia declares dislike of Sempronius, and approbation of Juba, but dutifully supposes she has no will of her own during Cato's life. At the sound of approaching feet these female friends retire, and make way for Sempronius, as Juba, to appear ; during his exultation at the near completion of his bold wishes, Juba, to his utter astonishment enters, thus confronted, nothing but the death of one or both can decide their contention ; this lot falls upon Sempronius, who dies with a vindictive execration in his mouth, while Juba goes to acquaint Cato with so strange and interesting an event.

Lucia and Marcia, alarmed with the clash of swords, again come forward, when the royal habit of Numidia being perceived on a dead body, Marcia, with the precipitate fears of love, immediately concludes it to be Juba, and throwing off all reserve proclaims her passion in the warmest, most undisguised terms ; at which critical juncture, her living lover comes within hearing, and becomes a transported witness of her amorous explanation ; till unable longer to contain, he presents himself to her astonished view, and heals her poignant woe ; she seems to regret that her heart has been so fully set to view, but generously confirms the prince's happiness, by repeating her declarations of regard ; thus they are sent off the stage tolerably happy, after the most ridiculous, bo-peep transactions, that ever disgraced any piece of serious composition ; the



whole love episode is indisputably pitiful, but this last mentioned scene deserves sovereign contempt. <sup>Cato</sup>

Cato and Lucius next come forward, the latter expressing surprise at Sempronius's conduct, the former, like an able practical judge of life, declaring, that general depravity takes away all subjects of surprise.

Portius, with looks indicating deep concern, approaches, and is questioned by his father if Cæsar has shed more Roman blood, an interrogation animated with the true spirit of greatness, signifying, that no other cause should move such apparent anxiety. On being told of Syphax's perfidious retreat, and that an attack is made upon Marcus's post, heroically forgetting the apprehensions of a tender parent, he is only concerned for his son's behaviour, and sends off Portius express to see that his brother's duty is fulfilled. On the appearance of Juba, covered with shame for his general's treacherous behaviour, Cato manifests great liberality of mind, in softening a charge of guilt the young prince levels against himself, as being a Numidian, of which character Syphax has just given so abominable a specimen.

Portius's return and abrupt mention of Marcus alarms our hero's fears, least his son has been any way deficient, but, upon hearing the manner of his fall, after a very gallant defence, the illustrious Roman utters a most noble and comprehensive exclamation in two words—*I'm satisfied*—Never did any author suit expression to character and circumstance

*Cato.*

stance better than Mr. ADDISON has done in this well-adapted stroke of significant brevity : Syphax's fate is a pleasing sacrifice to justice, and draws from Cato a line of real dignity, mixed with paternal tenderness.

On meeting the corpse of his son in such a mangled condition, any father, possessed of mere natural feelings, would manifest a weakness, though an amiable one ; but Cato, buoyed up by uncommon resolution, and the love of his country, supports the shock of so affecting an object with admirable firmness ; nay, draws a pleasing picture of death obtained upon so glorious an occasion, and speaks of it in such inspirative terms, that the frowns of the king of terrors melt into smiles.

Pointing out the example of the dead to the living son is judicious and affecting, and we are of opinion, that an almost unparalleled magnimity of mind is manifested in letting sorrow's melting tribute fall for the miseries of his country, though he refused it to the deace of a beloved son.

His description of Rome's decay rises in a beautiful climax, and concludes with a severe stroke upon Cæsar, as a political parricide ; the disdain he shews at any idea of soliciting or receiving Cæsar's mercy is noble, his advice to Portius worthy of a philosopher, the attention paid to the safety of his friends generous, and the leave he takes of them pathetic : if he had not been carried off by the monotonous jingle of metre, we do not perceive one idea or expression, throughout this scene, which we could wish

altered in any shape ; nor do we know where rational sensations can be more profitably gratified than by an adequate representation of it.

Though we cannot admit of an equality with Hamlet's celebrated soliloquy, yet we readily place that of Cato, at the beginning of the fifth act, before any other we have met ; the chain of reasoning is well compacted, the sentiments reach a very uncommon degree of elevation, and instruction pours forth from every line ; the intrusion of Portius, through filial anxiety for his father's safety, is reproved rather sternly by Cato, however, he soon calms, and collects himself against the worst events that fortune may have in store, gives his mourning son hopes, and retires to take the refreshment of some sleep to recruit his exhausted spirits.

Marcia joins her brother Portius, who comforts her with the idea that Cato is more composed, and has determined to live for the service of Rome. When Lucia comes on, we find her still harping on the love affair, amazingly out of season, as we think, especially as she seems to draw an uncouth inference in her own favour, from the melancholy circumstance of Marcus's death, a circumstance not very fit for an affectionate sister's ear. Lucius coming on, gives an account of Cato's pleasant situation in his sleep, which we think rather too close upon Cato's exit, for him to fall asleep, and Lucius to watch him so minutely as he has done ; besides, orders were given that no person should approach him, but this even in the view we place it is a very venial slip ;

*Cato.*

slip ; by intelligence Portius brings, there are hopes of succours to relieve Utica, and to place Cato in a probability of redeeming the glory, or staying the fate of Rome ; but this transient dawn of comfort soon passes off on the wings of an alarm raised by hearing a groan from Cato's chamber.

By the suddenness of this, after Lucius's account, one would be almost led to think Cato had stabbed himself in his sleep ; that he has given the fatal wound is confirmed by his appearance in an expiring condition ; the address he makes to his afflicted children and mourning friends, is very consonant to his character : Benevolence, paternal tenderness and invincible resolution, attend his last moments, and he falls into eternity an object of admiration, though a very dangerous and censurable subject of imitation for any man, in any station.

Lucius concludes the piece with deducing a diffuse general moral from Cato's fall, which observed in a national sense, as the author undoubtedly meant it, furnishes very useful, political instruction, and warns us against the perilous consequences of civil commotions which with undistinguishing rage sweep away the most virtuous, as well as the most vicious characters, nay, indeed, oftner fall heavy on the former as foes to licentiousness, than the latter who thrive in and consequently are most active to support it.

Having thus gone through a piece which at its first representation, from several causes made a great noise, and met uncommon approbation, even from  
contending

*Cato.*  
 contending parties, we cannot help observing after due acknowledgment of its useful political, and in many places moral tendency, that the author has in several scenes trifled with his subject strangely and we confess much surprized, that a person of Mr. ADDISON's judgement, should have enervated his genius, which had much more dignity than softness, with such insipid love scenes, so incongruous to the rest of his piece, especially when a more uniform plan could have been pursued, by introducing Cæsar in his camp dispatching Decius on his embassy, making him treat the proffered treacherous assistance of Sempronius with contempt, and bringing him after Cato's death upon the stage to offer some just strictures on the impropriety of his killing himself, which even as a Roman Cæsar might have done, since it is very certain that a life of so much public consequence should not be sacrificed to selfish pride, admitting that suicide in other cases might be justified.—

We are sorry that self-destruction is placed in so fair a point of view, and therefore think the catastrophe of this tragedy highly censurable because evidently pernicious.

In point of character, as a man, Cato strikes us with awful, yet agreeable sensations; he is a cool philosopher, a warm patriot, a resolute chief, an eloquent senator, a tender parent, and an affectionate friend; but as the brightest composition manifests specks, so we find this great man tainted with such a degree of inflexible pride, that when he  
 should

*Cato.*

should stand most collected, he gives way to that powerful principle, and rashly flies from his country, children and faithful associates, into the arms of death.

To personate this character happily, requires consequence both of person and countenance; a mellifluous extensive fullness of voice and depth of judgment; theatrical chicane cannot be of any service; we doubt not, but it will seem treason against the majesty of established criticism, to doubt Mr. QUIN's superiority within the last thirty years; yet we must venture the bold assertion, that deducting his figure, aspect and suitable voice, he was as erroneous as such attributes would admit; his action had a laboured sameness in it; his utterance appeared more subservient to the cadences of measure than the periods of sense, and his tones frequently swelled into offensive pomposity; in some of the lines to Decius, he struck out beauties; in receiving the news of Marcus's fall, he was fine, and wept for his country in the following scene like a great man; but his soliloquy and most other parts of the character, were chaunted in a very culpable manner; so far that we will be hardy enough to assert, to a nice ear he proved himself more of the methodical spouter, than the affluent orator.

Mr. SHERIDAN wants face and figure much, but speaks the author unexceptionably; and by keeping his voice more within its compass than in parts of greater force and variety, must render impartial criticism great pleasure; for a dumb Cato we should have

have given Mr. QUIN great pre-eminence, but for a speaking one prefer Mr. SHERIDAN, with all his imperfections, as coming nearer the author and nature. *Cato.*

Mr. MOSSOP, from what we have observed, can never be admired as a declaimer; such emphasis hunting as he is guilty of, shames oratory; and stiffened awkwardness of deportment ill supplies the place of ease and dignity: Mr. ROSS was too much of the gentleman, too little of the hero in externals; and, as to speaking the part, his utmost merit only reaches the praise of delivering his part in the manner of a well-tutored school-boy at Mr. RULE's, or any other academy. Mr. WALKER discovered, four or five years since, at Covent Garden, a very considerable share of merit, but not enough to serve as a standing dish for public entertainment.

As we cannot remember all the persons we have seen in the several parts of this play, it is hoped that mention of those who strike our recollection will suffice.

Portius appears to be sensible, and virtuously inclined, but dissembles shamefully with his brother, and is in action very insipid: Mr. BENSLEY's representation of him gives us tolerable satisfaction.

Marcus is of an undisguised, generous, warm temper, and, if tolerably supported, always claim respect on the stage: Mr. RYAN did him originally, and we doubt not with great merit, but was too much in the vale of years when we saw him to look

*Cato.*

any thing like the character ; however, we suppose he did it for the same reason a strolling player of sixty, once gave for retaining the part of the School Boy, I have done it, says he, forty years ago, and therefore think I have a right to do it now. Mr. DYER has afforded us satisfaction in this character, and Mr. WROUGHTON, tho' la, la; was more sufferable than in any other part we have seen him play.

Juba is a well-disposed young prince, and seems to have ideas of establishing fame on worthy principles ; his attachment to Cato would, however, redound much more to his honour, if there was not reason to suppose his love for Marcia the foundation of it. In point of action, he cannot be rendered very striking, being too much in the stile of mediocrity ; the best we remember to have seen was Mr. DIGGES, who gave him much more force and variety than Mr. SMITH, though we think the latter a tolerable Numidian prince.

Sempronius is a rogue of very black dye, who does not scruple to attempt giving the last stab to expiring liberty, and who wants to betray the most virtuous citizen, merely on account of being refused the object of his amorous passion. He is a fair-faced villain, and couches dark designs under the veil of patriotic professions ; extent and weight of expression are essential to this part, wherefore, we are induced to pronounce Mr. MOSSOP the best within our knowledge ; Mr. SPARKS was extremely re-



spectable, and we have received some pleasure from <sup>Cato.</sup> Mr. CLARKE, in this treacherous senator.

Syphax is a rogue also, and disloyal to his prince, but he is so upon rather a stronger principle than Sempronius, for having conceived a fixed antipathy against the Romans, whose polished manners he interprets effeminacy, and being enraged at Juba's attachments to Cato, he endeavours to persuade him therefrom, which being declined with harsh terms, the testy old Numidian takes the personal affront close to heart, and thoroughly connects himself with Sempronius's views. This character we deem better drawn than any other in the piece, and supported with great uniformity of spirit.

Mr. THE. CIBBER, in our judgment, formed a more adequate idea of Syphax than any other performer; his dissimulation and testiness was described excellently by that judicious comedian; but he retained so much of the cant, which is now happily exploded, that we could only applaud him for what he meant, not what he did. Mr. GIBSON is a mighty lukewarm representative of the old Numidian, but unless Mr. HULL should venture on him, is as well as any other person at present in Covent Garden. Indeed, to say truth, take it for all in all, there never was such a mangled spectacle seen at a Theatre Royal, as this tragedy was in April, 1770, at that house; and however strange the assertion may seem, it is strictly true, that Mr. GARDNER manifested more characteristic merit in Lucius, than any other person in the whole drama. Of all  
the

*Cato.*

the Decius's we have seen, we don't recollect one sufficiently to authorize particular mention.

Marcia is a lady possessed of just and elegant sentiments, a worthy offspring of the great Cato, except where she is rendered rather ridiculous by the metamorphose and fall of Sempronius : Mrs. WORTHINGTON gave that importance to the character by her figure and action, which Mr. ADDISON left for the actresses to supply ; Mrs. BELLAMY sustained the part very well, so did Mrs. HAMILTON ; as to Miss MILLER, lately, she was inoffensive, and that's as high as most of the young performers can reach.

Lucia is a very tender-hearted fair one, violently enamoured, yet says or does very little worthy the least notice ; a good tragic actress might be rendered insipid by such a part, no wonder then that Mrs. MATTOCKS should move through it without any degree of praise ; Mrs. STEPHENS's manner and expression is better calculated to make things of this sort agreeable, than any other theatrical lady we know.

Party is of a very dangerous nature to dramatic representations, but both *whigs* and *tories* taking this piece as a compliment to themselves, strenuously supported it, and gave a sanction it never deserved, for we must absolutely deny its theatrical excellence ; it is certainly a moral, colloquial poem of great merit, but a tragedy full of defects ; it should be immortal in the closet, but cannot justly claim possession of the stage.

## A S   You   L I K E   It.

A C O M E D Y   by   S H A K E S P E A R E.

**T**HIS pastoral comedy, for such it may properly be stiled, opens with Orlando and Adam, the former a young gentleman, recounting to the latter, steward of the family, the scanty provision made for him by the will of his father, and the cruelty of his elder brother, who treats him with much contempt, not only neglecting his education, but putting him under the severe necessity of associating with menial servants ; this, he confesses, rankles in his mind, and he expresses a commendable determination to bear it no longer. Here his elder brother, Oliver, appears, and accosts him in a churlish manner, to which he replies at first with complacence, but, upon irritation, makes spirited retorts, and their conference rises to a quarrel, which the old man endeavours to soften ; Orlando claims his small patrimony, or more respectful usage ; the former seems most agreeable to Oliver, who partly promises it, and then not only dismisses his brother with much malevolence, but forbids Adam his house also.

From an interview between Oliver and Charles, the wrestler, we find that Duke Senior is banished by his brother, but that Rosalind, on account of the affection Celia, Duke Frederic's daughter, bears her, does not go into exile with him ; upon Charles's  
mention

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mention that he hears Orlando has a private intention of wrestling with him, suggests to Oliver a most brutal idea, no less than the destruction of his innocent brother, and this he cultivates by bribing the wrestler to exert all his superior strength against him, with the utmost malevolence ; and after this ready agent of his malice disappears, gives a most extraordinary reason for his hatred of Orlando, no other than the many amiable qualities of that youth, which he is either unable or unwilling to imitate.

Rosalind and Celia succeed this worthy blade, the former expressing a dejection of spirits, on account of her father's exile, the latter offering cordial consolation, which prevails, and produces sportive mention of love, which Celia rather seems to think dangerous to play with ; some speeches, when fortune is proposed as a subject of their mockery, we cannot help transcribing, on account of the truth and pleasantry of those ideas they create. " Benefits, says Rosalind, are mightily misplaced, and the bountiful, blind lady doth most mistake in her gifts to women : " to which Celia prettily replies, " 'Tis true, for those that she makes fair, she scarce makes honest, and those that she makes honest she makes very ill-favoured : " however, we think, according to a custom of SHAKESPEARE'S, they play too long upon words, and wear imagination threadbare ; the clown appears as a messenger, and desires Celia to go to her father, in that familiar stile adopted by such gentry ; his assuring the truth of what he  
has

has said upon his honour, occasions an egregious but laughable quibble of terms. *As you like it.*

When Le Beau enters, he acquaints the ladies that they have lost much sport ; upon enquiry into the nature of the amusement they have missed, it appears to be a wrestling match, wherein three young fellows have had many bones broke, are in danger of their lives, while their aged father is distracted with grief at their misfortune, which, as the clown sensibly observes, must be notable sport for ladies.

Duke Frederic, with Orlando, Charles, &c. enter, the duke humanely pitying Orlando's inequality of person for an athletic contention, has endeavoured to dissuade him from the trial, but in vain ; wherefore Frederic desires the young ladies to try their persuasion ; this kind task they readily undertake, and delicately enter upon the subject ; however, the young man appears to be under a gloominess of mind, which makes life or death a matter of indifference to him ; the ladies seeing him so hazardously bent afford him all they can, good wishes for success.

The wrestler vaunts his superiority with great apparent confidence, while Orlando shews engaging contrast modesty ; this contention, though an odd incident for the stage, occasions an agreeable anxiety, and the effect of it, Orlando's victory, very pleasing sensations ; making Rosalind and her cousin extend favour to the weaker party, is a just, and genteel compliment to female generosity.

Upon

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Upon enquiry who Orlando is, and finding him the son of Sir Rowland de Boys, Duke Frederic seems to entertain strong prejudice against his father, and goes off abruptly. Rosalind here mentions the affectionate regard *her* father had for Sir Rowland, which prejudices her in favour of Orlando, to whom she and her cousin offer congratulation for his escape and unexpected success; upon their going off he drops a hint in two lines of a particular effect Rosalind has had on him. Here Le Beau enters, and acquaints Orlando, that whatever fair appearance Duke Frederic might wear, his temper is of a dangerous, uncertain nature, and cannot safely be trusted, therefore advises his departure.

Orlando's enquiry which was the duke's daughter, is answered by information, that Rosalind, the taller, is daughter of the banished, and Celia of the reigning duke; who, by Le Beau's intimation, entertains a dislike of his niece, which is soon likely to appear; Orlando thanks his friendly adviser, and they go off severally.

Celia and Rosalind re-enter, from what occurs between them we perceive, that Rosalind has suddenly conceived more than a friendly regard for Orlando. The duke now makes his appearance in great wrath, though from what immediate provocation we know not, and dooms his niece to sudden banishment; Rosalind modestly pleads her innocence, and Celia urges her friendship as motives for remission of so harsh a sentence, but the duke seems immovable in his whimsical severity, and even limits the extent of

Rosalind's

Rosalind's stay. Celia's determination to share the <sup>*As you Like it*</sup> exile of her cousin and friend, manifests most amiable and tender generosity of mind ; they determine to seek Duke Senior in the forest of Arden, agree to disguise themselves, Rosalind as a man, Celia as a shepherdess, and go off with a composure of mind truly philosophical.

The second act commences with the old duke and his faithful followers, as forresters ; we have more than once objected to frequency and length of quotation, notwithstanding considerable pains might have been saved thereby ; however, we are now come to a speech so replete with moral meaning and poetical beauty, that we cannot avoid presenting it as a treat to the reader.

Now my co-mates, and brothers in exile,  
 Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
 Than that of painted pomp ? are not these woods  
 More free from peril than the envious court ?  
 Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,  
 'The season's difference, as the icy phang,  
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind ;  
 Which, when it bites, and blows upon my body,  
 Even till I shrink with cold—I smile and say  
 This is no flattery—These are counsellors  
 That feelingly persuade me what I am—  
 Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
 Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
 Wears yet a precious jewel in his head,  
 And this our life, exempt from public haunt,  
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
 Sermons in stones and good in ev'ry thing.

Jaques's

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Jaques's account of the sequestered stag, which follows this excellent speech, the satire therein couched against that most abominable perversion of nature, ingratitude, is pathetically pleasing, but we are resolved to resist the temptation of transcribing it, and therefore refer those to the play who wish a perusal of it, assuring every competent judge, that taste cannot have a higher, or more valuable gratification.

When these rural philosophers, as we may call them, retire, Duke Frederic, and some attendant lords appear; the duke intent upon finding out his eloped daughter; as we remember, this short scene is omitted in representation, and in perusal seems of very little importance, unless we receive it in the light of mere connection, nor can it be then very material; however, search is ordered for the runaways, and as Orlando is supposed of the party, his elder brother is called upon.

The scene changing to Oliver's house, Orlando appears knocking at the door, and is answered by Adam; a most feeling conversation ensues, wherein Adam speaks powerfully to every generous sensation; his offering the small sum his œconomy has saved, to Orlando's use, is truly affecting; his reliance on that general providence which caters for beasts of the field, and birds of the air, is worthy a pious, sensible heart; and the distinction he makes between temperate and licentious youth admirably instructive. Orlando's grateful sense of this good and affectionate old steward's behaviour, is by no



means inadequate, and their going off stamps a regard which must render them both acceptable to the audience whenever they appear. *As you Like it*

Rosalind, in her masculine habit, with Celia and the Clown now present themselves, much wearied with their journey; however, the Clown indulges his quaint witticisms. Corin, an old shepherd, and Sylvius, a young one, come forward, the latter mentioning his love for Phoebe, the former advising him to a moderation of his passion; Rosalind sympathizes with Sylvius; they ask Corin for his assistance in respect of some refreshment, and receive an hospitable answer; upon his telling them that the farm and flocks he belongs to are to be sold, Rosalind and Celia express a desire of becoming purchasers, and constitute the old shepherd their agent for that purpose.

A very insignificant scene between Jacques, Amiens, &c. ensues, indeed, there is a song which, by the help of Dr. ARNE's very agreeable music, renders it tolerable.

We next perceive Orlando sustaining Adam, who faints for want of food, with very tender care; and promising to procure something, he desires the good old man to rest under some shelter till he comes back.

Duke Senior and his lords appear next, to whom Jaques comes with mirthful aspect, occasioned, as he says, by a conference he has had with a motley fool, of which he gives a beautiful and instructive account; upon their sitting down to a rural entertainment,

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tainment, they are accosted by Orlando, whose sudden, unreserved attack, occasions the duke to enquire what the cause of such an abrupt intrusion may be, which he explains by a plea of necessity : on receiving a cordial invitation to sit at the table, he softens into grateful gentleness, and expresses himself in the following truly poetical lines.

I thought that all things had been savage here,  
And therefore put I on the countenance  
Of stern commandment—But whate'er ye are  
That in this *desart inaccessible*,  
Under the shade of melancholy boughs,  
*Loose* and *neglect* the creeping hours of time.  
If ever you have look'd on better days,  
If ever been where bells have knolled to church,  
If ever sat at any good man's feast,  
If ever from your eye-lids wiped a tear,  
And know what 'tis to pity and be pitied,  
Let gentleness my strong enforcement be,  
In the which thought I blush and hide my sword.

Notwithstanding the evident beauties in this speech, we conceive two objections, one is to the word *inaccessible*, which puts us in mind of what an Irish judge once said to the high sheriff of a county: “ Really, Mr. Sheriff, the roads to this town are *impassable* ;” to which the sheriff very properly replied, “ Pray then, how did your lordship get hither :” so might the duke ask Orlando how he got into the inaccessible place—The word *desart* also seems very much misapplied when speaking of a forest, for, as we apprehend, the term properly implies a waste tract of country, with scarce any trace of vegetation ; our

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Second objection to the manner of placing the words lose and neglect, they should certainly be transposed.

The duke's replying to Orlando upon those ideas he has suggested, is prettily imagined, and the young man's attention to his old friend extremely amiable. This unexpected guest, and the account he has given, draws from the duke a most useful, consolatory and philosophical remark : That however unhappy we may be, there are others as much or more so. Jaques here delivers that masterly picture of human life, commonly called the Seven Ages, which we should think it our duty to transcribe, but that it has been so often quoted and parodied, that scarce any person can be unacquainted with it.

Orlando entering with Adam, they receive a kind welcome, and partake of the entertainment, while Amiens sings that agreeable and sensible song, " Blow, blow, thou winter's wind." The duke learns who Orlando is, and mentions in the conclusive speech of this act, the regard he had for that young man's father.

Duke Frederic appears at the beginning of the third act, demanding Orlando of his brother Oliver in angry terms, and upon not receiving a satisfactory answer, he orders a sequestration of Oliver's effects, with banishment of his person ; this short scene is often omitted in representation, but we think it should always be retained.

Orlando now constituted one of Duke Senior's followers, as a tribute to his love, hangs up a copy  
of

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of verses, addressed to Rosalind, in a tree, expressing his passion in an agreeable soliloquy.

Corin and Touchstone entertain us with a conversation which exhibits several strokes of sensible, tho' whimsical satire, but delicacy is much offended by several passages; however, the following speech of Corin makes amends for many slips: "Sir, I am a true labourer, I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck."

Rosalind comes in reading Orlando's verses on herself, which the Clown very humorously burlesques. Celia enters reading another poem of amorous tendency; after sending off the Clown and Corin, she enters into a conference with her cousin Rosalind, upon the verses and the writer of them, and after teizing her with suspense, informs her that Orlando is the man, which throws Rosalind into a pretty, natural palpitation of heart. Seeing Orlando and Jaques approach, they draw back, while a short discourse passes between those gentlemen, the latter of whom cynically rails at the former's soft amorous tendency, which brings on retorts from each side not of the civilest nature; when Jaques goes off, Rosalind approaches with confidence, under favour of her disguise, and rallies Orlando with very pleasing vivacity; her distinctions respecting the paces of time are peculiarly pleasant.

The

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The picture drawn of a lover, and the method of cure for amorous feelings, shew a just idea of nature. Rosalind's mode of drawing in Orlando to woo her, as his mistress, is an agreeable device, for this purpose she takes him off to shew him her cot, that he may call every day.

A scene of some little laugh succeeds between the Clown and Audry, which is generally concluded in representation by a most pitiful and fulsome rhyme to the woman's name. Rosalind and Celia succeed, expressing some doubts concerning Orlando's constancy ; the old shepherd comes on, and acquaints them, that the love-sick swain, Silvius, whom they have often enquired after, is at hand, with his hard-hearted mistress ; when the Sylvan pair enter, they listen ; on finding Phoebe obstinately bent against Silvius's solicitation, Rosalind steps in to his assistance, and catechises the scornful shepherdess with great humour ; checking him also for prostituting his praise to encrease that vanity which damps his suit. Phoebe throws out a few hints of tender regard for Rosalind, which are treated with disdain, and Silvius is ordered to pursue her. After Rosalind and Celia go off, we find Phoebe lavish in praise of the former, as a captivating youth ; however, she softens so far in favour of Silvius, that she admits of his wooing ; then expresses some resentment at the freedom with which Rosalind treated her, determines on writing a sharp letter in return, which Silvius promises to deliver, and thus the act concludes.

In

*As you Like it.*

In the first scene of the fourth act, we are entertained with a good deal of spirited quibble and word-catching, between Rosalind and Orlando ; one passage is so peculiarly beautiful, that its merit will sufficiently apologize for its appearing here. When Orlando says he will love for ever and a day, she replies, “ Say a day without the ever : no, no, Orlando, men are April when they woo, December when they wed ; maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock pidgeon over his hen ; more clamorous than a parrot against rain ; more new fangled than an ape ; more giddy in my desires than a monkey ; I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain ; and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyen, and that when you are asleep.”

When Orlando goes off to attend the duke at dinner, Rosalind professes regard for him even to a romantic degree of warmth, and she gives a whimsical account of Cupid. Here a short scene between Jaques and some other foresters intervene, but is omitted in representation, so that Silvius comes on directly to Rosalind with Phœbe’s letter, which is no sooner perused but Rosalind stiles it rank abuse ; however, on communicating the contents, it appears, the enamoured shepherdess has strung together several jingling couplets of compliment ; Silvius is confounded by his message and the strange interpretation of it, which causes Rosalind to send him with a charge to Phœbe, that she must love him.

Here

*As you Like it.*

Here Oliver approaches the ladies, enquiring for their cottage, Celia points out its situation ; however, from appearance, he judges them to be the persons he seeks for ; upon being confirmed in this opinion, he presents a bloody napkin to Rosalind, and Orlando's excuse for not coming according to appointment. The description of his own perilous situation, and the generous interposition of Orlando to save his life, are set forth with much poetical beauty ; but absurdity, in point of circumstances, strikes our perception plainly ; for how could all he mentions have happened during the short interval of Orlando's absence ; particularly, how has he had time to change from the wretched state of being ragged and overgrown with hair, in which he lay under the oak, to his present appearance ; indeed, he talks of being led to the duke, who ordered him array and entertainment : but, upon the whole, we think matters are oddly hudled together, merely to favour a flight of fancy.

The hurt Orlando has received in his skirmish with the lions, overpowers the spirit of Rosalind, that she faints under the depression, and is led home by Celia and Oliver.

At the beginning of the fifth act, Touchstone and Audry offer themselves to view, and are joined by William, a simpleton, upon whose weakness, Touchstone indulges his own supposed wit very liberally ; an account of Audry, at last he breathes out most terrible threats if William should entertain any thoughts of that amiable creature ; this is a  
scene

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scene which makes us laugh without our knowing why, and consists more of mere whim than good sense or useful satire ; upon a summons by the old shepherd they go off.

Orlando and Oliver next appear, the former, as well he may, expressing some surprize that Celia, as Aliena should have so sudden and forceable an effect upon the latter ; it is indeed an affair of much haste, however Oliver not only acquaints us with his own passion, but also informs us, that Aliena has exchanged love with him ; when Duke Frederic banished Oliver, order was given to sequester all his possession, and from the condition in which Orlando found him, it is reasonable to think those orders had been amply fulfilled ; yet here he proposes giving his estate to Orlando, and turning shepherd himself for the sake of Aliena.

When Rosalind comes on, after expressing concern for Orlando's accident, she confirms Oliver's account of the love affair between him and Celia ; we wish a hint, with which her observation upon the proposed marriage concludes, was made delicate. On Orlando's expressing concern that his happiness is not so near as his brother's she comes to the point, and promises, if he is so inclined, that when his brother is married, he shall marry Rosalind ; Silvius and Phoebe joining company, the several parties express themselves prettily as their dispositions lead ; their conversation is a sort of cross purposes, which Rosalind ends by satisfying all parties with a string of ænigmatical promises.



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In representation Duke Senior with his followers come next; to them enter Rosalind, Silvius and Phœbe; the heroine under favour of disguise urges a previous compact on all sides; from her father she extracts a promise, that upon restoring his daughter he will give her to Orlando, from Orlando that he will receive her, from Phœbe that she will marry her, or declining that, Silvius; then goes off as she says to make all doubts even.

Touchstone and Audry coming forward, the company are entertained with some free, significant remarks, by the former: his proofs of being a courtier, and his dissertation upon quarreling, are admirable; we have not met a severer reproof of the false fire and romantic honour of formal duellists, than this affair of Touchstone's, upon a cause seven times removed.

Rosalind, restored to the customary appearance of her sex, enters, is recognized by her father and lover, rejected as a woman by Phœbe, and thus her compact with all parties becomes fulfilled. Matters being brought to this agreeable conclusion, Jaques de Boys comes on, and acquaints the duke of his restoration; Duke Frederic having been checked in the career of his wickedness, and persuaded to resign the dukedom by a religious hermit, with this favourable account, and a prose epilogue, which never fails of working a very pleasing effect, the comedy of *AS YOU LIKE IT* concludes.

This piece considered at large has a very romantic air, the unities suffer severe invasion, several

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Scenes are very trifling, and the plot is hurried on to an imperfect catastrophe: we hear something of Oliver's being punished as an unnatural, abominable brother, but have a strong objection to crowning such a monster with fortune and love. An interview between the dukes would have afforded an opportunity for genius and judgment to exert themselves commendably; however, with all its faults, there is not a more agreeable piece on the stage; the characters are various, and all well supported; the incidents, if not striking, are certainly pleasing; the sentiments, with very few exceptions, are pregnant with useful meaning; and the language, though quaint in some places, shews in general strength and spirit worthy of SHAKESPEARE's pen.

Duke Senior is an amiable character, sustained with philosophical dignity, turning the frowns of fortune, as every man should do, into the means and motives of instruction: what he says is not of sufficient length to constitute a very conspicuous part in action, but if a performer has any declamatory merit, he may shew it to advantage here. We have no objection to Mr. BURTON in this noble exile, but wish Mr. ACKMAN may never think of him, except as a feast upon his own benefit night, that happy season when annuals vegetate into characters of consequence in the drama, and large capital letters in the bills.

Duke Frederic is a notorious villain, of whom no performer can possibly make any thing, wherefore we shall not mention any body. Jaques, a cynical

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 speculatist, possessing much good sense with great oddity : Mr. QUIN was an object of much admiration in this part, but from the opinion we have already delivered of that gentleman's declamatory abilities, it is impossible to admit that praise the partial, misled public allowed him. Mr SHERIDAN wants nothing criticism can demand, he looks the part well enough, and speaks it with the same degree of emphatic, descriptive feeling with which the author wrote. Mr. DIGGES did it considerable justice ; Mr. SPARKS and Mr. BERRY both had merit, but were too laborious and heavy ; Mr. LOVE's utterance of Jaques's fine, flowing periods, puts us in mind of liquor gurgling through the dissonant passage of a narrow-necked bottle.

Orlando, without any striking qualifications, is an agreeable personage, and never can appear to more advantage than through the late Mr. PALMER's representation of him ; there was a degree of spirited ease manifested by him not easily met with, and his personal appearance was most happily adapted : Mr DEXTER, a performer of merit, in several parts, rendered this young man very pleasing ; and Mr. ROSS, gave as much satisfaction upon the whole as any audience could reasonably expect ; as to Mr. REDDISH, he does not look at all like the character, and speaks it too sententially, wherefore we cannot allow him that approbation he mostly deserves, and we are glad to give him,

Adam

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Adam is a most interesting old man, and though little seen, must always remain in the recollection of a distinguishing spectator ; we dont recollect to have received greater pleasure from any body than Mr. MOODY, in this faithful steward ; whose tender sensibility must sit well also upon the feelings and expression of Mr. HULL.

Touchstone, in sentiment and expression, is made up of whim, a character quite outré ; therefore in action cannot be tied down to any exact line of nature. Mr. MACKLIN marked the meaning of this character very strongly, but wanted volubility ; Mr. WOODWARD is extremely pleasant, and indulges an extravagance not censurable ; however, in respect of pointedness and spirit properly mixed, a forceable yet free articulation, Mr. KING stands foremost in our estimation.

We remember to have had the singular pleasure of seeing no less than five ladies perform Rosalind with great merit, whose names we shall set down in the succession allotted them by our judgment ; Mrs. BARRY, Mrs. PRITCHARD, Mrs. WOFFINGTON, Miss MACKLIN, and Mrs. HAMILTON ; the three former had a very evident superiority over the two latter, and the two first we deem so equal in merit, that we only prefer Mrs. BARRY as having a more agreeable, characteristic appearance ; Mrs. WOFFINGTON's figure was unexceptionable, but her utterance and deportment were too strongly tinged with affectation, especially for the rural swain ; there is a peculiarity and embarrassment of expression in  
this

this part which requires good natural parts or able instruction, to hit it off happily. *As you Like it.*

Celia has a good deal of pretty, unimpassioned speaking, as well calculated for Mrs. BADDELY and Mrs. W. BARRY as possible, nothing is wanted in the part which those ladies cannot agreeably furnish ; and Audry in Mrs. BRADSHAW's hands, deserves the tribute of laughter, for being well figured, and as well spoke.

It is almost needless to remark, that as not one of SHAKESPEARE's pieces is without abundant beauties, so not one can claim the praise of being free from egregious faults ; however, in *As you Like it*, the latter fall very short of the former ; and we make no scruple to affirm, that this piece will afford considerable instruction from attentive perusal, with great addition of pleasure from adequate representation.

We are now come to the end of our first volume, with the very singular satisfaction of not having one material objection, either public or private, offered against our humble endeavours, notwithstanding that living authors and performers have been treated with undisguised, and we hope liberal freedom ; if any person mentioned in the foregoing sheets can prove a trace of partial, interested friendship, unbecoming timidity, or determined malevolence ; if the praise and censure alternately bestowed on the same persons do not appear founded upon reason and nature, or at least the offspring of involuntary error, the authors of this work will then give up all claim

to

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to the unbiassed veracity they originally professed ; and they once again declare, that no connection or view whatever, shall, in the continuation of this work, warp opinion : several attempts have been made for that purpose, but without effect ; which they hope will prevent any future ones ; critics, like the Roman, should exercise justice, even upon a son.

It was intended to add an investigation of each performer's particular requisites and defects, but by respectable advice, which we shall always follow, that part of our design is deferred to the last number of the second volume ; to which also we shall add a dissertation upon public elocution in general, and lay down rules by which most of our criticisms on performance may be tried.

We have nothing further to add at present, but cordial gratitude for the very candid reception we have met ; and hope that our slips, as several there must be in such a variety of considerations, may be pointed out with the same spirit of kind censure, we have used to others ; in the fulness of heart we declare that praise in every instance has given us considerable pleasure, and the irksome necessity of finding fault, has furnished an equal degree of pain.

The list of theatrical mushrooms is also by desire postponed to the end of the next volume, when it will no doubt be considerably enriched.

*The End of the FIRST Volume.*

# I N D E X.

To the DRAMATIC CENSOR.

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